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ROSNAH





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“And then, suddenly, without the slightest sign or warning, everything went.”

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R O S N A H

BY

MYRA KELLY

AUTHOR OF

"LITTLE CITIZENS," "WARDS OF LIBERTY,"  
"THE ISLE OF DREAMS," ETC.

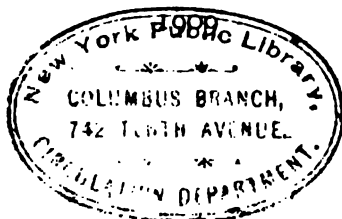
"'Tis not written that the Irish race forget,  
Tho' the tossing seas between them roll and fret;  
Yea, the children of the Gael  
Turn to far off Innisfail,  
And remember her, and hope for her, and pray  
That her long, long night may blossom into day,  
A many a time, a many a time."

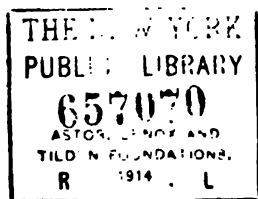
--JOSEPH I. C. CLERKE.



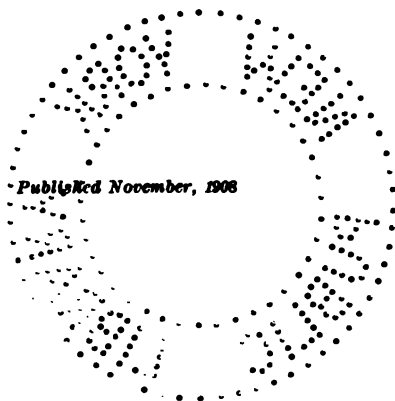
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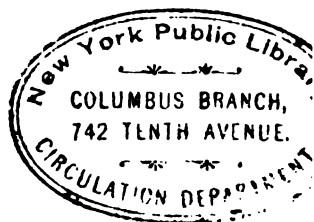


2000

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
"And then, suddenly, without the slightest sign or warning, everything went'" . . . . . <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"Are you talking about "Cross Fitzgerald" the Mutiny Man?' asked Adelaide" . . . . .	40
"I'll call her after me mother,' said Peter Carey" . . . . .	98
"Lave go,' said Peter, grimly. 'Stop slootherin' and caloo- therin' me'" . . . . .	104
"It was only she who could persuade the old men and women to submit . . . to her father's despised successor" . . . .	186
"A marvellous creature, half man, half boy, half poet, and half seer" . . . . .	190
"But, to me, his eyes are as the stars'" . . . . .	256
"His old campaigning days stood him in good stead" . . . .	296
"There now, steady now. No one's going to hurt you'" . . . .	312
"And then you'll be the loveliest woman in Galway'" . . . .	318
"The General . . . held the head upon his knee" . . . . .	324
"He was with me. He stayed with me till half-past twelve'" .	360





## ROSNAH

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### I

**A**FTER keeping up some show of spirit for six or seven miles—Irish miles—the road which led from Kilgoggan to Cork began to reel and stagger in its course when it reached the first desolate cabins of the desolate village. It crawled on for a feeble quarter of a mile; past the low wall which separated it from the Widdy Maloney's little place, it lurched against the front of the chapel, ricocheted off to the tiny shop which was post office, club, newspaper office and everything else as well, and then perished miserably at the gates of Glencora, the estate of the Earl of Creighton. If the road could but have endured a few more limping feet it might have gathered courage to live a longer life, for the Park of Glencora was singularly beautiful even for beautiful southern Ireland. Once inside its gates the traveller found himself in a fairy land of tree and shrub and flower which sheltered many a stately deer and

## ROSNAH

gaudy pheasant in its safe green depths. But without the gates the road lay dead in the shade of compassionate hawthornes and laburnums, while the dejected cottages stood at a respectful distance mourning, with blind windows, for its short life and its early death. As Mrs. McCarthy phrased the popular feeling:

"If it had'a only kep on to the next town—if there is one—maybe it would bring someone into the little place. But, goin' the way it does, sure it's only takin' thim away it is, glory be to goodness."

"Musha ma'am, dear," her neighbor, Mrs. Moriarty would remonstrate, "you're low in yourself or you wouldn't be talkin' like that. Isn't there all kinds of quality goin' up to the Great House; and comin' and goin' on the bit of road here? Wasn't it the best of life and fashion that was in it last year when Lord Kevin, God bless him! kem of age?"

But visiting "quality" was not sufficient for Mrs. McCarthy's idea of the social life. The occasional passing of guests from "the Great House," though interesting while it lasted, could not compare in pleasure-giving power with the long and rambling "collogues" which fell to the lot of those living on some highway of travel where at almost any hour of daylight a friend or a stranger might stop and pass the time of day with one who had leisure for

## ROSNAH

conversation. And the peasant in Ireland; though he be bankrupt of all else, will manage to retain great store of leisure.

Young Lord Kevin Creighton and his sister, Lady Rosnah, riding home in the radiance of an April evening shared Mrs. McCarthy's view of the unexciting nature of life in Kilgoggan. And Father Power, hurrying to the bedside of a parishioner, might have added that even death, in that little community, was prosaic, sordid, commonplace.

Down the erratic old street the two young people rode. Even the tenderness of the evening light could make no softening impression on the squalor all about. Even the kindliness of Lady Rosnah's manner could awaken only a momentary gleam in the eyes which looked out from window space and doorway.

"It's all so changed," sighed Lady Rosnah as the horses turned in at the Park gates, "so greatly, greatly changed! Do you remember, Kevin, when we were youngsters, how busy everything used to be?"

"Well, you see," he pointed out with some show of logic, "you can't expect much gaiety where there's hardly anybody living. There's nothing left but the old people and the children, and I'm as sorry about it as you are—sorrier in fact—for the property is going to the dogs, and that's more my

## ROSNAH

affair than yours. But what's the use in talking about it? It's the same all over Ireland. You only notice it so much because you've been away lately."

And truly the year that Lady Rosnah had spent in London had brought about great changes in Kilgoggan. A wave of emigration fever and a recruiting Sergeant had visited the village almost simultaneously and had swept it clear. All its able-bodied sons and daughters, lured by gold or glory, had vanished down the road which led away, always away, from the little cluster of houses among the hawthornes, horse chestnuts, and laburnums. The residue, old people, cripples, paupers and babies huddled more closely together and waited. One would have been puzzled to know for what they were waiting, but when they were engaged upon such household matters as could not be transacted upon their thresholds the slightest sign of life upon the road drew them forth to stare and gossip. And the spinning of coarse stockings, the weaving of rush baskets, conversation, "mindin' the childer" or "takin' a breath of air" were all performed in the open with eyelids narrowed and eyes fixed upon the point, a mile away across the fields, where the road fell out of sight over the brow of a little hill.

"So you see," Lord Levin went on, "if we are a bit quiet, it's only natural. It's the excitement of London you miss, I'm afraid. Father and I must

## ROSNAH

seem poor substitutes, but then there's Miss Stewart. And there's Sheila."

"Of course, of course," Lady Rosnah answered. "You mustn't think I'm discontented. It's only that I haven't enough to do. Father is away so much and so buried in old books and stones when he's here, and you're always out. Miss Stewart is a dear old thing, but still—"

"And Sheila?" he suggested—

"Is a darling. But I've not seen so much of her since I came home. Does it ever strike you that you rather monopolize her when we go to Miss Stewart's together, and that when I ride over alone I either find you there or you arrive soon afterwards? And I've noticed that, although Sheila is always dreadfully surprised to see you, Miss Stewart doesn't seem so."

"Well, isn't she a darling?" Lord Kevin challenged with sudden warmth. "Wouldn't any man be proud to think she'd look at him?"

"A great many girls," Lady Rosnah interrupted—for she was very fond of this big brother of hers—"a great many girls would be glad enough to look at you, my boy, if you'd only give them the chance. Why don't you go about a bit and see the world?"

"Father is always talking like that—when he talks at all. What do you think he said yesterday? that unless I could make up my mind to do the



## ROSNAH

'grand tour' he'd get us a tutor to teach us Sanscrit or something so that we shouldn't be wasting our time. There's your chance, if you're so badly off for something to do."

"Thank you," laughed Lady Rosnah.

"But I told him," the boy went on mischievously, "that if he wanted to get any more tutors he had better get a duenna too. The way you and John Lovell used to go on was scandalous. Rank favoritism, I call it. He taught you twice what he taught me. They all did. No one has cared a copper for my education since the last governess left and the tutors began. You know any amount more than I do."

"You said that to father?" Lady Rosnah demanded, "about the duenna, I mean. And what did he say?"

"He walked to the library window; you were out in the rose garden with the greyhounds at the time. You remember, just before luncheon?" Lady Rosnah nodded. "And he said: 'Is that your sister?' 'It is,' said I. He took his field glasses and looked at you for a while. 'You may be right,' said he. 'She seems well made and graceful. I hadn't noticed it.'"

"But I had breakfasted with him a few hours before," marvelled Lady Rosnah. He has seen me every day for the last six months. Field glasses?"

## ROSNAH

she repeated with scorn. "I wonder he didn't put me under his microscope."

Lord Kevin nodded.

"You did look rather like a butterfly," he acquiesced, "though I never saw a pink one. Then the Governor said: 'I will make a more careful examination at luncheon and consult with you later. May I ask you to join me at three o'clock?'"

"Well?"

"Well, at three he seemed greatly disturbed. 'You were right,' said he, and I can tell you, Rosnah, you ought to be flattered. 'I have observed carefully and I am forced to agree with you; your sister is a damned fine woman. Where shall we look for a duenna?' So now cheer up. You won't be lonely long," he laughed. "Can't you imagine her? A lady in reduced circumstances, eminently respectable, references from the nobility, etc. Might be induced to undertake care of young lady—"

"You're a demon," said Lady Rosnah. "An unmitigated villain," and then, her pretty eyes filling with sudden fire: "I won't stay to be chaperoned. She may take care of you and Sheila if she likes—and can. How could you be so unkind, Kevin, and so interfering?"

"Really, old girl, I was only joking. I had no idea the *pater* would take the thing seriously. And yet you did—honor bright, now didn't you—flirt

## ROSNAH

with poor old Lovell? I think that was one reason for his leaving. Wait a moment! Listen!" he broke off. "What's that?"

There was a quick patter of hoofs upon the drive behind them.

"Sheila's pony!" cried Lord Kevin, and wheeled his horse toward the sound.

## II

**M**ISS SHEILA FITZGERALD was, as her aunt could have testified, a young person who insisted upon a larger share of her own way than is considered advisable by such philosophers as include the rod among the elements of education. But Miss Stewart would have insisted at the same time that this possible defect in her niece's character had arrived with Sheila from India fifteen years before. At that time, and in a baby of four, it had seemed an attraction rather than a fault, and Miss Stewart, accustomed to the indeterminate, inarticulate wishes or impulses of her friends' children, congratulated herself upon the decision of her small charge's mind and speech. She had been prepared somewhat for this trait. Lady Mary had written: "There is no one else to whom we should be willing to consign our darling. Will you, dear sister, take

## ROSNAH

her, for me? I dread so much leaving her with any but a relative of my own. Not even to the brothers and sisters of the dear Colonel who are taking care of the boys for us, could I entrust my little girl. With you I know she will be safe and happy and you will have in her a charming companion. If you should find her inclined to be headstrong just at first, I trust you will take into consideration her frail health and the determined spirit of the dear Colonel which is already bringing him recognition." Financial details and arrangements followed to which Miss Stewart paid but superficial attention at the time, but which had since proved satisfactory and convenient. The aunt laid in numerous yards of red flannel and other warm apparel for the little exile. The niece arrived; took the aunt's heart captive in a burst of frenzied grief during the first night of her stay; was swathed in red flannel, wore it, squirming, for one hot week and then cast it from her. An argument ensued in which the "determined spirit of the dear Colonel" had showed forth unmistakably. It had triumphed over the gentle spirit of Miss Stewart and it had gone on triumphing ever since.

Meanwhile the Colonel had become a General; had since distinguished himself in many campaigns; been decorated with many medals, and detested in many stations. And meanwhile, too, the delicate little child had changed into a beautiful young woman,

## ROSNAH

the joy of her aunt's old heart and the idol of young Lord Kevin Creighton. She had practically grown up with the two motherless children of that eccentric antiquarian, the Earl of Creighton. She had shared their tutors, their adventures, and their visitors; and they had shared the gentle care and the sage counsels of Miss Patricia Stewart, the sweetest of confidants and most comprehending of comforters.

On the evening upon which Lord Kevin had predicted a duenna for his sister, a letter had come for Sheila. Letters were events in that quiet community and Miss Stewart felt some chagrin when her niece ordered her horse to be saddled and rode furiously away, instead of sitting quietly in the drawing room and discussing the news.

"She really is a very excitable girl," she sighed. "Not in the least like her poor mother. It's the General's spirit, I suppose. It carries her away."

It was carrying her now, assisted by a chestnut hunter and followed by wonder and speculation of all Kilgoggan, up the winding avenue of Glencora to the point where Lord Kevin and Lady Rosnah were waiting for her and it was no lover's blindness which made Lord Kevin think that she was very beautiful and that she rode like an Amazon, straight, lithe and fearless.

"Rosnah," she called when she was within speaking distance, "Rosnah, it has come at last. My peo-

## ROSNAH

ple have come back from India—here, read father's letter."

She drew it from the pocket of her habit and gave it to her friend. Lord Kevin jumped from his mount, drew the bridle rein over his arm and caught her as she dropped from her saddle and, while Lady Rosnah read the letter, she stood silent, one tiny gauntleted hand caressing the chestnut's neck. Sheila was curtly commanded to bid farewell to her aunt and to set out, on the following Wednesday, for Avonmere is the county Wicklow, which would henceforth be her home and where she would meet the other members of her family, including hers, "very faithfully—Desmond Fitzgerald."

Four anxious young eyes watched Lady Rosnah as she read the missive aloud and at the end Sheila produced an already moist handkerchief and began to cry. Lord Kevin still looked at his sister. He generally turned to her when he was troubled and she seldom failed him.

"And you don't like to leave your aunt, do you, dear?" said she to Sheila now. Sheila shook her down drooped head.

"I won't," she was inferred to say. But the General's spirit seemed to have deserted her and tears were welling slowly under her heavily lashed eyelids. Lord Kevin moved a shade closer to the disconsolate little rebel.

## ROSNAH

"Shall we go up to the school room and talk it over?" Lady Rosnah suggested, "and," with a glint of a smile at Lord Kevin, "I think you two ought to walk. Poor old Major is dreadfully blown. Shall you mind if I ride on?"

So Sheila and Lord Kevin walked side by side through the budding woods, Lord Kevin leading the horses. They went by bridle path and across field where cowslip and blue bells nodded in the long shadows of the trees. And as they walked they talked. At the fairies' ring, where tall sycamores stood sentinel about the smooth green mound—the fairies' dancing place on moonlight nights—the talking and the walking ceased, for Lord Kevin whispered: "Will you?" and Sheila answered: "Yes."

Then silence fell.

### III

LADY ROSNAH CREIGHTON, having acted in haste, pondered at leisure as she rode on alone. She was experienced enough to guess rather clearly what was likely to happen when two young people sufficiently interested in one another are menaced by instant and complete separation. In fact, her own departure from London, though deliberate and long announced, had precipitated two or

## ROSNAH

three interviews upon which she looked back with a disquieting mixture of humiliation, amusement and regret. Yet how could she have refused to make this opportunity for Kevin; so big and handsome and pleading. And, after all, could she expect him to do better? So many young fellows did so infinitely worse. Sheila was well-born, well-mannered and most fair to look upon. Her father was a distinguished soldier, her mother an heiress in her own small way. Lady Rosnah had heard of the eldest son of the family in London, where he was a barrister, a Queen's Council, and a most eligible and elusive matrimonial *parti*. Surely the boy might do worse, reflected this philosopher just one year older than he.

Lady Rosnah had found time to order tea to be served in the schoolroom and to change from her habit into a trailing gown of white and silver before her maid informed her that Miss Fitzgerald and Lord Kevin had arrived. The schoolroom of Glencora was one of the most charming places in that rich and charming house. The trio had passed many pleasant hours within its book covered walls, and Lady Rosnah now found the loiterers standing in one of its deep windows. At her entrance they turned and instantly she knew that her anticipations had been fulfilled.



## ROSNAH

"Rosnah, dear old girl," her brother began and halted.

"Rosnah, darling," Sheila cried.

"Yes, I know," she smiled. "I've known it for a long time, and I'm glad, glad, glad."

"It's been coming on for a long time," Lord Kevin assured her. "Sheila and I were just wondering when it began. Years ago, I think, when we wore Holland waggoners. I knew you'd be glad. And of course the *pater* will be awfully pleased. He is so fond of Sheila and of Miss Stewart."

This last flight of lover's rapture was founded upon fact. Many and many a time in the early years of his bereavement had the Earl of Creighton turned to the capable Miss Stewart for advice. She had chosen nurses, interviewed governess or tutor applicants, assisted him in the matter of house parties and protected the children from more than one self-designed step-mother. And everyone was fond of little Sheila, with her generous heart and her quick temper.

"Papa will be delighted," Lady Rosnah acquiesced heartily. "But aren't we rather ignoring the General? You will have to ask his consent, too, you know."

All the joy died out of Sheila's face. She looked heart brokenly from Lady Rosnah to Lord Kevin, then round the familiar room. And then, as she

## ROSNAH

thought of leaving it all, the "dear General's spirit" returned to her, straightening her small figure, setting her pretty chin at a determined angle and giving a note of defiance to the voice with which she repeated:

"I won't go."

"But what will you do?" urged Lady Rosnah. "He has sent for you as we always knew he would. You *must* go. And, after you've been there for a while, Kevin can follow you and speak to your father. We mustn't let him think that we want to keep you from him altogether."

But her words of gentle wisdom produced little effect. Neither Lord Kevin nor Sheila would consent to the parting. In vain Lady Rosnah urged and pleaded. Sheila sat crouched in her old, study-time chair, very small and forlorn in her riding habit, but very determined withal, while Lady Rosnah pointed out the pleasures and advantages of obedience.

"And if you don't go," she argued, "he will only be coming down here and taking you away from us forever. You know the kind of man he is. You remember what that nice Captain Stanley told us about him. How the native soldiers in his regiment were more afraid of him than of all the horrors the mutineers threatened. So they were loyal, and he got medals and crosses and decorations from the Queen.

## ROSNAH

And how, when he got the Victoria Cross, his friends began to call him 'Cross Fitzgerald.' And do you think we can defy him? We three youngsters? And think, dear, another thing, you'll be having a mother. None of us remember what that means."

"It can't be better than an Aunt Patricia," interposed Sheila loyally.

"But it will be different. And think of four brothers, four delightful young fellows, all waiting to be nice to you."

"I'd like to see them try it," Lord Kevin threatened vaguely, but his sister went on:

"Don't you remember how often Mr. Lovell used to speak of that brother, Desmond, of yours, who was in his house at Cambridge. He liked him greatly."

Lord Kevin still threatened to make it very unpleasant for any young Fitzgerald who should dare to be called out on fraternal duty. Sheila was so lost to all feminine consideration as to disclaim any interest in any number of fine young fellows waiting to be brothers to her.

"It is not," Lady Rosnah went on, "as though there were other daughters. You're the only one. And you and Kevin have no right, simply because you can't bear a short separation, to spoil this meeting to which Lady Mary has been looking forward these many years. You know how she wrote

## ROSNAH

about it in all her letters. How long she has waited to gather you all together. So it's your clear duty to be a little unselfish and to go to your own people."

"But I don't know them," insisted Sheila, and then she suggested scornfully: "If you're so terribly fond of them, why don't you go yourself?"

"Yes, why don't you?" Lord Kevin broke in. "You'd never have a dull moment there. You could disport all day with those four lovely brothers and be a sister to all of them at once."

"Nonsense," said Lady Rosnah. "They don't want me. They want Sheila."

"But they'll never know the difference," Sheila urged. "Anyone will do for them. And all they know about me is just as true about you. Blue eyes, brown hair. I haven't had a photograph taken in five years, and then I looked like nothing at all. You'll be perfectly satisfactory. None of us has ever met any of the others."

"But the height of me."

"Poof, what are two inches! You can say you've grown."

"They're lucky to get any daughter at all," Lord Kevin growled, "after behaving so heartlessly all these years. They never even came to look at Shiela. And now, just when I most want her, they begin to interfere. You might as well go and be a blessing to their declining years."

## ROSNAH

"I most emphatically will not," answered Lady Rosnah. "You two children must be mad to suggest such a thing."

And yet as they argued and pleaded the idea began to lure her. There was a dare-deviltry in it. Just enough danger to make it exciting. Just enough promise of fun to make it worth while. And it seemed only kind that some one should go to make the picture complete. Kind, not only to the gentle Lady Mary, whom she had never seen, but also to Miss Patricia, who would otherwise be obliged to confess that she could not control the comings and goings of her charge. And it would be the kindest of kindnesses to Sheila. What could be more disastrous than that her people should know, even before they saw her, that she held their happiness and esteem more lightly than her own whim. If the first days could be bridged over it would be easy enough to explain. Lady Rosnah had a talent for explaining and it had not languished for want of use during the years that Lord Kevin, Sheila and she had spent together. If Miss Patricia's peacocks were reported to be shorn of their gaudy tails, it was Lady Rosnah who explained. If the Earl returned from Berlin and found a thriving family of guinea pigs being reared in his quiet library, again it was Lady Rosnah who explained. If an irate nurse or a distracted governess sought her charges vainly throughout the long

## ROSNAH

summer days, always it was Lady Rosnah who explained.

So she was assured that, given time, she could make the opportunity to explain that Sheila was too shy, or too ill, or even, perhaps, too much in love to leave Kilgoggan; that she could arrange that a second invitation including Lord Kevin should be forwarded to the renegade. Everyone would be amused and surprised. It was the sort of thing one read of in books or saw in plays and the worst that could happen—detection—would not be so very bad. For despite her youth, her gentleness and her gaiety, she knew that Lady Rosnah Creighton would be a welcome guest in any household.

She had reached this stage of her reflections when Lord Kevin added the last artful touch:

“But if you go away, what shall we do with your duenna?”

“Give her my love,” his sister answered, “and tell her to keep her eye on Sheila for me.”

## IV

**G**ENERAL DESMOND FITZGERALD:  
Knight Companion of the Bath, Fellow of  
the Royal Geographical Society, Distinguished Service Order, Victoria Cross, etc., etc., etc., and—for

## ROSNAH

the last three weeks—Justice of the Peace, stood upon the hearthrug in the stately red drawing-room of Avonmere and straightened his cravat by the light of the tall candelabrum upon the mantel-piece. It was a very high and tight cravat of the fashion worn forty years before when Desmond Fitzgerald had laid aside civilian's dress and encased his slim figure in the Queen's scarlet. The face which looked back at him from the mirror was very different from the boyish one he had turned toward India so many years ago, but the figure in the faultless evening costume, to whose sombre black he was not yet quite reconciled, was slim and upright still.

"By Gad, sir," said the General tartly as he gave a final wrench to his stock and fixed his eyeglass in place for the sixth time in five minutes. "By Gad, sir, I believe you're in a funk at the prospect of meeting your own children."

And yet he, no less than his gentle consort, had given much thought to this reunion and had purposely arranged to make it as impressive and ceremonious as he could. It was by his command that the five young people had arrived during one afternoon; that they had been met and greeted only by the servants who conducted them to their rooms, supplied them with the General's compliments, the dinner hour, hot water and deft aid in the unpacking and laying out of necessary apparel.

## ROSNAH

"We may as well let them make themselves as presentable as possible," said the General in explaining his wishes to Lady Mary. "I don't expect much, my love, for you were the only decent looking member of your family; but we are entitled to as agreeable an impression as they can make upon us."

"I'm sure they will be very nice," said his gentle consort. "All your people were handsome, Desmond."

"Well, we'll hope for the best," said the General. "But don't allow yourself to count on much. Do you clearly remember your Uncle Peter, my dear?"

"But he was only my aunt's husband," poor Lady Mary remonstrated.

"Don't contradict me. He had a face like a horse," he snapped. "And the principle's the same."

So Lady Mary submitted herself to the hands of her faithful Ameerah, the *ayah* who had been friend, nurse and maid to her through many years of her life in India. The General had treated Cagney, his body servant, to a half hour of mingled confidence and profanity and had then descended to the largest and least homelike of the drawing rooms which he had chosen as the scene of his levee.

The red drawing room was a long, high ceilinged apartment with a door at one end, a fireplace at the other and a dreary waste of red carpet between. There were upon ordinary occasions a few inhospit-



## ROSNAH

able and uncomfortable looking chairs and tables disposed at formal intervals upon this carpet, but Cagney and the footman had been ordered to clear the field for action and the furniture was now ranged stiffly along the walls. The room was illuminated by innumerable candles calculated to dazzle eyes coming suddenly out of the soft dimness of twilight without. This glare seemed focussed in the eyeglass which shone out from under the bristling eyebrow of the General as he waited, fuming, for the performance to begin.

In some far distant part of the house a clock began to strike the hour—eight—the time set for the rising of the curtain. The General swore softly and the door opened.

And straightway forty years vanished. He was in Calcutta again, and again the regimental band was playing as he stood, nervous and hot, in the chancel while Lady Mary had come to him out of the crowd about the door. The light that had shone in her eyes that day was shining still and her cheek was as softly flushed. Beautifully dressed, gracious, timid and sweet she came unhesitatingly to his side and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Kiss me, dear," she begged, laughing at her own childishness. "I'm in *such* a flutter that I'll cry unless you do."

The General bent and obeyed her.

## ROSNAH

"You're a remarkably handsome woman," said he. "The only member of your family who had a single feature to boast of. I wonder if you would have grown like them if I hadn't taken such good care of you."

"But where," faltered Lady Mary, when she had parried this compliment, "are the children?"

"Waiting in their rooms until you should be ready to receive them. You are ready now?" His wife nodded. "And you are not expecting too much, my dear?" She shook her head. "And you have a clear memory of your Uncle Peter in mind, my love?" She nodded again. "Very well then," said the General and pulled the bell rope violently. The footman presented himself.

"You may usher in our guests," the General informed him.

"Your what, sorr?" queried the footman who was not yet entirely trained to his new position.

"Our guests. The lady and the gentlemen waiting in their rooms. And be sure to announce each name clearly and to wait five minutes between each introduction."

"I will, yer honor," said the footman, and withdrew.

"Misther Desmond Fitzgerald," he shrieked a moment later, and a good looking man of about thirty-five stood in the doorway. The husband and wife

## ROSNAH

studied him silently as he came toward them, calm, correct and carefully groomed. The hair was growing thin upon his temples; his head bent forward a little as he walked and he wore glasses. His stock was as high and as stiff as his father's; his voice was charming as he returned the General's greeting; his manner perfect as he stooped to kiss his mother's hand. Lady Mary's mind was in a tumult and her heart swelled beneath the laces on her breast. This man was her son, her little first born son whom she remembered as a delicate child with eyes too large for his face. During his last few months in India he had developed a fancy for sleeping only in her arms. For hours and weeks she had held him—a relaxed little body, a patient little sigh, a soft little self-compassionate smile. That was Sonny. Yet this was Sonny. This grave and kindly gentleman with a manner more restrained than the General's, a voice more grave!

"Misther Gerald Fitzgerald," shouted the footman before she could command her voice or even muster a smile, and all three turned toward the door.

There advanced upon them a resplendent creature with waving hair, floating whiskers, low rolling collar and loosely tied scarf. Gerald Fitzgerald had been intrusted to the care of an uncle who lived in Paris, a scholar, a member of the Legion of Honor and a diplomat. The nephew, with the adaptability

## ROSNAH

of his race, had acquired all the mannerisms, the affectations, of that gay city's gayest set. His languor, as he approached the group upon the hearth-rug, could not have been more overwhelming if he had been born in the Faubourg St. Germain. The General snorted and Lady Mary gasped.

"I do hope I've not kept you waiting," the young boulevardier drawled. "There was no one about when I arrived and so, *faute de mieux*, I went out for a stroll through the gardens."

The General's eyeglass clanked against his shirt stud and Lady Mary jumped. For the General spoke no language but his own—save Hindustani—and held that the Queen's English, pure and undefiled, was good enough for any man or nation. Too good for many, he would have said.

Next to arrive was Lawrence Fitzgerald, who slouched half the distance between door and fireplace and swaggered the other half. He was frankly uncomfortable and a prey to the emotion which the other two sons either did not feel or did not show: and his face—a heavy, long nosed face—was flushed to a dark orange and polished like mahogany. And the General in an audible but unintelligible aside remarked to his wife: "Your Uncle Peter, my love. As I feared."

But Lawrence greeted his mother with more warmth than either of the other sons had shown. He

## ROSNAH

was ingenuously delighted with her and with his elder brother. The General and Gerald were rather out of his line and it was with a distinct feeling of relief that he heard the footman's announcement of:

"Misther Owen Fitzgerald," and turned with all the rest to greet his youngest brother.

A handsome boy, eighteen or nineteen one would have guessed. Tall and very thin, he carried himself with distinction and lithe grace. His eyes were dark and widely open, his black hair emphasized the whiteness of his skin. On each high cheek bone a flame of red flickered and his sensitive nostrils quivered, though his lips were quiet as he neared the group so silently awaiting him. And once more the General groaned. He knew the meaning of that dash of red. The boy was doomed. He knew the meaning of those eager, sombre, burning eyes and of that twitching nostril. He knew the type. Impatient of all control; consecrated to some ideal and hopeless cause. Not all the power of all the nations of the earth could subdue him. Not all the learning of all the sciences could keep him long alive. General Fitzgerald had, in the service of his Queen, lived much in a country where her rule fosters the spirit he saw now in the face of his youngest born. He had seen men march out to meet death for religion or patriotism or loyalty with just the dauntless,

## ROSNAH

patient smile with which Owen met his brothers' greetings and his mother's soft caress.

"I congratulate you, sir, upon your taste," said the General. "You have been wise enough to resemble your mother." And Lady Mary was laughing delightedly when the footman bellowed in irrepressible excitement:

"Miss Sheila Fitzgerald! And there's no more of them in it, yer honor."

### V

**A**ND surely the figure which stood upon the threshold might have upset the decorum of a more perfectly trained footman if the heart beneath his livery were Irish.

A tall and graceful girl was Lady Rosnah Creighton who now as Sheila Fitzgerald returned to her own people. Her coppery hair was piled high upon her dainty head; her soft shoulders were bare and a cloud of pink trailed round her. A few steps forward into the room she came and then halted, head high, eyes wide, breath fast. Almost it seemed as though she would vanish back into the shadows, almost one would have thought her a flower blown in from the garden.

Very softly the General swore. Nothing short of

## ROSNAH

profanity could express his surprise. For this was not the shy country girl, the bread and buttery simpleton that his opinion of his sister-in-law, Patricia, had led him to expect. There was no *gaucherie* in the poise of the rounded figure, no constraint in its movements, no awkwardness in its stillness. There was a jewel in her hair and others on her breast and she carried herself with a dignity and surety, a gentle pride, a sweet reserve which seemed to say that jewels and beauty and youth and love were hers for the mere wishing.

"A damned fine young woman by the Lord," said General Desmond Fitzgerald, C. B., V. C., etc., etc., in unconscious repetition of the Earl of Creighton's opinion, "and the living image of my poor mother, my love."

The younger Fitzgeralds were no less impressed and the two elder sons who had looked upon this family collection as rather a bore—Gerald had frankly so characterized it to Desmond but a moment before—ceased from the invention of urgent messages recalling them to foreign capitals. Lawrence stared at her frankly and Owen chanted softly:

"Rich and rare were the gems she wore  
And a golden ring on a wand she bore  
But oh, her beauty was far beyond—"

"Beyond anything?" Lawrence interrupted.

## ROSNAH

Lady Mary would have gone to meet her daughter had not the General restrained her. After that first instant's hesitation Rosnah moved on again in the glow and gleam of the candle light. Her lustrous eyes were half amused, all pleading as she met the glances fixed upon her.

"Oh! you darling!" cried Lady Mary suddenly breaking away from her husband's hand. "You darling, darling child. I'm your mother, dear, and this is your father. He loves you already because you are like his mother. And these are your four brothers, sweetheart, all ready to love you and take care of you. And how is your Aunt Patricia and do you think you'll be happy here with us and forgive us for staying away from you for so many, many years? Can you forgive us and love us just as other children love their parents?" And here poor Lady Mary grew hysterical and wept a few tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

Rosnah gathered the dainty figure into her young arms and murmured comfort.

"Of course I shall love you," she answered. "I do already"—and added after a hardly appreciable pause—"Mother."

Lady Mary recovered her self control.

"I'm a selfish old woman," said she. "Here are the General and the boys all waiting to welcome you. Go and kiss them, darling."



## ROSNAH

Again there was a hint of recoil in Rosnah's manner. And really any girl might have been embarrassed at the command. In her brief transit across the carpet she had tried to distinguish the brothers one from another and even in that short space she had marvelled at their utter unlikeness in all but coloring. The French importation she had recognized most easily. That was Gerald. His rare letters had been as full of affectation as he seemed and she remembered how merrily the trio in the Glencora school room used to laugh over them. The delicate boy upon Lady Mary's left was Owen, of course, the baby. Such a handsome boy! So like his mother and so unlike the burly red-faced man beside him. That must be Lawrence, the brother whose letters had always been full of hunts and horses and dogs. He had sent many a pup and many a string of game to his sister at Kilgoggan. Yes, that was Lawrence and he was looking as uncomfortable and as disconcerted as she felt. And the distinguished looking man whose arm rested on the mantel-piece as he studied her calmly and critically—that was Desmond. Yes, he bore all the marks of his London *habitat*. And it was when Rosnah's eyes had reached him that she seemed most likely to vanish away.

"Do kiss them, dearest," Lady Mary urged. "They are all your brothers. You must learn to love them."

## ROSNAH

"I shall learn very readily," she answered brightly, and offered a rose leaf cheek to the General, to Owen, to Gerald and to Lawrence, and for each she had a ready little speech of greeting. But when Desmond stepped forward and stood before her she looked into his face with a sweet gravity and he met the look with a kindliness no less grave.

"Desmond, the wisest of us all," said she. "I hope you will find me a satisfactory sister," and gave him both her hands.

And once more the voice of the footman smote the air. He had another announcement to make and had been carefully rehearsed in it by the harassed butler, but at second sight of the girl his training deserted him and left him bankrupt of all but the simple fact:

"The soup's coolin' below on the table," and the general laughter following upon his withdrawal was the best of lubricants for the stiffness which had been settling on the family group.

Down in the panelled dining room the laughter and the friendliness increased. Even the General unbent and showed a caustic jocularly which was his only form of pleasantry. Lady Mary glowed with pride as she looked from son to son and back again to her daughter. They were all sufficiently good to look upon; Owen was handsome in his tragic way, and Lawrence—now that some of his restraint was

## ROSNAH

wearing off—showed a likeness to his father which Lady Mary knew must be one of the secrets of her future life.

During a lull in the gay babble of questions and answers with which the children were endeavoring to bridge the years, Gerald drawled to his father:

"I was half afraid to accept your invitation to this delightful gathering, don't you know. Our papers give such dreadful accounts of the condition of things in this country. One never knows what that Parnell chap will be putting the people up to next. Isn't he a funny beggar! What business has he to be mixing up in the affair? He is some sort of an American."

"Mr. Parnell's mother was an American. His grandfather was the Admiral they used to call 'Old Ironsides' over there," said Owen with a suspicious exactitude of information.

"And isn't he decently bred and all that sort of thing?" Gerald went on. "*Chacun a son gout*, of course. But I wonder how he can associate with that Irish rabble which calls itself a 'party' and calls him its leader. *Canaille!*" said Gerald Fitzgerald in light disgust.

The ill-trained footman dropped the silver dish-cover which the butler had just handed to him and Rosnah, from her place upon the General's right, could see him clearly as he retreated toward the side-

## ROSNAH

board. His eyes were fixed on Gerald's unconscious back and they were murderous. She looked at the better trained butler. His face was expressionless, but the hand with which he filled the General's glass trembled slightly and some of the red wine stained the cloth.

"My dear sir," said Desmond, addressing Gerald, and both Rosnah and Lady Mary breathed more freely when he entered the conversation, "my dear sir, Mr. Parnell is a high-minded gentleman. Even his enemies, and he has more of them perhaps than any other man in public life, admit that he is disinterested. I know him slightly. He was at Cambridge for a year while I was there. And I would suggest that you inform yourself a little upon the Irish Question before you pretend to discuss it."

"The Irish Question?" snorted the General disdainfully. "There is no such thing as 'The Irish Question.' The only question to the minds of all thinking men is this: How much more of this sort of nonsense is the Government going to stand? And by gad, sir, if I were in the ministry I wouldn't take long to answer it. With the mouths of cannon, sir!"

"You have been out of the country for so long," said Desmond calmly, "that you must pardon my pointing out that there is an Irish Question and that England has not found the answer yet. We

## ROSNAH

who live in England know this. Sheila living in Ireland knows it. And Lawrence. And Owen, coming fresh to it from quiet Coventry—”

“Aye, I know it,” Owen repeated.

“We can’t avoid knowing it,” said the girl earnestly. “Only a day or two before I left home I was talking about it—to—a friend of mine. From our own little village of Kilgoggan fifty of the young people have emigrated or enlisted during the last two years. The place is empty. Dead. And why? The ground is as fertile as ever. The boys and girls who are gone were as fond of their people as it was possible to be. If you could have seen—” her soft voice faltered and her soft eyes were full of tears —“if you could have seen some of the partings I have seen. If you could see some of the loneliness I know! My old nurse has been crooning a queer little song lately and one line of it haunted me as I came up on the train and saw the destitution at all the little stations we passed through:

“‘It’s the most distressful country that ever yet was seen.’ I don’t remember any more of the song, but the air, as my nurse croons it, is enough to break one’s heart.”

“God bless you, miss, I’ll teach you the rest,” whispered the footman as he presented the mayonnaise.

“I wish you could have brought Norah with you,

## ROSNAH

dear," said Lady Mary eager to change the trend of the conversation. "I suppose, though, that your Aunt Patricia could not spare her. And after all it is just as well. Poor old Ameera has come back with us and she is yearning to wait upon you. You remember Ameera, do you not, dear? Your native nurse who used to be so good to you?"

"My memory of everything about India is indistinct," Rosnah answered truthfully.

"I remember her," Owen broke in. "I remember the soft sticky sweets she used to give me. And hadn't she a scar on her forehead?"

"On all one side of her face, dear," Lady Mary answered. "And on her arm. She was in a frightful condition when your father brought her to me. The poor creature's husband had died and they had burned her over his body—suttee you know—and left her for dead. One of the men found her and they brought her into cantonments. So I nursed her."

"You did," interrupted the General, "and pretty thanks you got for it at first. When that woman recovered sufficiently to know that she was alive she nearly lost her reason. And for years we had to watch her. Wanted to go back and make a job of it, by Gad."

"But presently," Lady Mary went serenely on, "Desmond was born and she stayed to take care of

## ROSNAH

us. She was so busy for the next ten or twelve years with Gerald and Lawrence and Sheila and Owen that she had no time for suttee. And then it was too late. She was 'outcasted' by her people—technically she was dead all this time, you know—so she came home with us. She spends her time crouched over the fire in my dressing room and asking me when the 'missy sahib' will arrive."

"Do you boys remember Cagney?" asked the General, not to be outdone. "Cagney, my old soldier servant? You ought to. He taught you all to ride."

"He came into my room just before dinner," said Lawrence. "And says I to him: 'Cagney, me boy, you're not changed a bit. I'd a known you if I was to meet you in the inside of a Bianconi mail car on a thick night.' He was surprised to hear me say it."

"He would be," commented the General grimly.

"But Desmond could not remember him," Lady Mary urged, rushing to protect the unconscious Lawrence. "He was such a very little chap when we had to send him home."

"And yet I do," Desmond insisted. "I remember a white walled garden with strange flowers growing in it. When I climbed up on the wall, I could see a river far away across a pink town. There was a big dome like a bubble. And a lot of smaller domes. By Jove, I've never thought of it between then and

## ROSNAH

now! And at night when I couldn't sleep a big man in scarlet used to carry me about the garden. That was Cagney. Sometimes a dark faced, big-eyed woman was with him. I remember how big the stars looked, out there in the dark, and how near to the tops of the houses they seemed. I remember an old man in Turkish trousers. I remember you, mother, in a white dress crying when a lot of men marched away."

"Delhi!" cried Lady Mary, "and the Jumma mosque and The Ridge. Years afterwards, Desmond, when the mutiny came that Ridge was the scene of more bravery and death than almost any place in India. And to think of your remembering it. You can't have been more than three at the time you speak of."

"It is remarkable," the General boomed, "but my people have always had good memories. And now shall we adjourn to the drawing rooms? But first—I have the honor to propose a toast—The Queen, God bless her!"

The men drank the toast, standing, but Owen's glass was untouched when he put it down. Rosnah and Lady Mary observed this. So did the two servants. And Lady Mary Fitzgerald learned again the vanity of hope. For thirty years of exile she had looked forward to this night; this gathering together of all her beloveds, as to the end of anxiety



and the dawn of peace. The thought of it had supported her through good and evil fortune, through separations, illness, sorrow and loneliness. It had fortified her to endure the horrors of the Sepoy mutiny. And already her house was divided against itself.

## VI

**I**'M DYING," announced the Duchess of Clontarf piteously, "and no one is making the slightest effort to save my life. I suppose it is the sort of thing a poor lone widow must make up her mind to."

"Don't suggest such a thing," said her sister. "It would be so inconsiderate of you to do it while I'm staying with you. Can't you wait until next month? And meanwhile, may I have a cup of tea?" The Duchess complied obediently before she continued:

"And there is no chance of relief or remedy for three or four weeks. One can't tell earlier even if one be the landlord."

Adelaide Lytton consumed a piece of bread and butter before asking:

"Do you consider yourself, Ducky, a cheerful companion for the breakfast table? You might as well be a newspaper with your deaths and widows and remedies. And what do you intend to die of?"

## ROSNAH

"Oh! it will be a natural death, a perfectly natural death. I shall give no one any trouble about it. I shall go out into the garden, lie down in the least prickly of the rose beds, cross my hands—so—upon my gentle breast and die, of curiosity—"

"Oh!" said Miss Lytton commiserately, "so bad as that. Did it come gradually?"

The Duchess dried a fictitious tear and nodded a dejected head.

"It has taken two months to reach this fatal stage. Just two months ago when I was beginning to be uneasy about a tenant for Avonmere. It had been empty for six months; longer than it had ever been so since poor George died and we found that there wouldn't be money enough to live in it ourselves and have something left for the boys when they should come of age. Poor George was so unfortunate in his business associations!"

Miss Lytton, being a wideawake young person and having supplemented her own childish memory of her noble brother-in-law with anecdotes and hints supplied by those who had known him more intimately, would have omitted that qualifying "business." So far as she could learn all his associations had been unfortunate either to himself or to the party of the second part. His wife had been no exception to this rule. She had married him in opposition to all advice and warning at the end of her

## ROSNAH

first season. And from that time until his death four years later her people had heard little and seen nothing of her. She had then reappeared upon their horizon a little quieter, a little older, with two sons, a large establishment in Wicklow, an undaunted spirit, and very little else.

Promptly and philosophically she had betaken herself and her belongings to the Dower House and placed Avonmere, the country seat of the late Duke of Clontarf, in the hands of her solicitors who had managed to secure tenants for it in tolerably unbroken succession.

"Two months ago," she was telling her sister as they sat in the pleasant breakfast room of the Dower House, "General Fitzgerald drove up from the station in a fly. Jerry showed him all about the place. He liked it—as who shouldn't—and then he asked for me. Jerry tried to make him understand the impropriety of that; told him that Burnside and Wolf were authorized to make all arrangements. But he insisted upon seeing me. Was quite stiff, almost rude, about it."

"Are you talking about 'Cross Fitzgerald' the mutiny man?" asked Adelaide.

The other nodded. "I told Jerry afterwards that he was probably one of the very few people in the world who had tried to brow-beat General Fitzgerald and had lived to tell the tale. And, after all, he



are you talking about "Cross Fitzgerald" the Mutiny Man?" asked Adelaide."

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## ROSNAH

only wanted to say that he would take Avonmere for an indefinite number of years on condition that the boys and I would consider ourselves perfectly free to use the grounds, the gardens—even the stables—as if they were our own. It seems he knows Jack. Saw him at Calcutta just before he sailed. Looked me up in Burke; discovered the relationship and—well you know what Jack is. His name must be an ‘open sesame’ all over India by this time.”

Adelaide nodded. She was accustomed to finding her way made straight and pleasant among army people because she was Jack Lytton’s sister.

“We had tea,” the Duchess continued, “and he met the boys and John Lovell. Lovell was at Cambridge with one of the young Fitzgeralds so he and the General hobnobbed at once, if so imposing a person could be said to do anything so human. At any rate they got on beautifully and the General told us that he was expecting all his children to visit him; that neither he nor their mother had seen any of them since they were babies. He confessed in a confidential moment that he was not quite sure as to how many there were because one or two had died since they were sent home and he did not care to distress Lady Mary by discussing the matter with her.”

“You’re inventing,” Adelaide accused her. “It’s utterly impossible.”

“It’s true. So I accepted the freedom of the

## ROSNAH

grounds and gardens and he agreed to take the place. Caravans of furniture poured into it, servants swarmed over it and a week ago they arrived—the father and mother. She looks like a darling. And the servants tell me that yesterday all the children arrived *en masse* and that the General refused to see them until they had dressed for dinner and that he locked Lady Mary into her dressing room when she wanted to speak to her daughter.”

“But why should you be curious when you know all about the thing? And what do you care about a lot of children? Are you so anxious for playmates for the boys? You and Mr. Lovell seem to keep them sufficiently amused.”

“Children!” echoed the Duchess with her adorable smile. “Didn’t I tell you that one of the sons is a contemporary of John Lovell’s? He must be thirty-three or four.”

The enthusiasm of the Duchess communicated itself to Adelaide. Here was food for her insatiable interest in other people’s affairs. The eyes of Miss Lytton—and they were admittedly fine eyes—grew keen.

“And we can’t call for three weeks,” she agreed. “And by that time the novelty will have all worn off and they will be chattering together like anything and calling one another by their Christian names as though they had grown up together. Can’t you

## ROSNAH

think of some excuse for going up to-day? You're the landlord. There must be *some* possible reason."

"In Ireland," said the Duchess, "as the papers might have told you, the landlord class never approaches its tenants except for the purpose of eviction. I, having only this one house to let, am denied that relaxation."

"I'm ashamed of you," vowed Adelaide. "Here you have dragged me away from the frivolities of town and, when you could provide an amusement like this to lighten the tedium of the empty hours—"

"Oh! thank you, dear," cried her sister.

"You deliberately throw the chance away. I suppose you call it professional etiquette. I call it lazy neglect of manifest duty."

"Perhaps," suggested her Grace, "perhaps the roof will leak or the chimney take fire or one of the floors fall in. In any of those cheerful circumstances I should be, *ex officio*, the comforter, and then I should waive ceremony and fly to rescue them."

"And I should consider it my duty to fly with you. Ah, here are the boys at last!" she broke off as she heard voices and boots in the hall. Her nephews had, according to custom, come back from their ride late for breakfast and their tutor was with them.

The Duchess was so slim, so gay, so debonnair with her mischievous eyes, her wide red mouth and her



## ROSNAH

wealth of tawny hair that, to hear her speak of her boys, was to imagine small sailor clad, fat-legged youngsters, jammy and petted and spoiled. So that the young Duke, an awkward, morose young fellow of sixteen and Lord Eric, fifteen years old and as tall as his brother, were a very decided surprise to the unwarned stranger. Their tutor, John Lovell, had more than fulfilled the promise of his credentials and, during the eighteen months he had spent at Avonmere had made for himself a very important place in the establishment. To him her over-trying little Grace of Clontarf turned for advice, opinions, and assistance in the management of her small finances or her big boys. To him the visiting relatives or relatives-in-law of the same small lady learned to turn with speeches beginning: "Can you not persuade the dear Duchess"—or "Perhaps if you, as an unprejudiced stranger, were to suggest to her Grace." To him the servants came with reports or problems which "might worrit her little Grace if she was to know." And to him Lord Eric turned with an eager friendship and a perfect confidence. The Duke, the older boy, disliked him. But then the Duke disliked nearly everyone and was morbidly assured that his grandmother, the Dowager Duchess, had been right when she had said to her somewhat acidulated maiden daughter in the unsuspected hearing of the boy:

## ROSNAH

"Don't tell me that you believe it's her dread of parting with 'the dear children' which makes her keep them at home instead of sending them to Eton. Fiddlesticks! It's because she can't do without gentlemen's society and the boys are her excuse. She must have a tutor for them. Mark my words," said the ponderous and noble mother-in-law, "she will end by marrying one of those tutors."

So the young Duke kept a watchful and disapproving eye upon John Lovell, much to that gentleman's amusement. For a burned child dreads the fire and Lovell had not yet recovered from a very severe scorching which he had received when tutor to young Lord Kevin Creighton of Glencora.

## VII

**I**T WAS part of the daily routine of life at the Dower House to stroll through the gardens every morning after breakfast. Escorted by Jerry, who loved the flowers as though they were his children, the Duchess moved leisurely from bed to border; from shrubbery to greenhouse. And on every morning from the appearance of the first shy snow-drop to the vanishing of the last knobby chrysanthemum, Jerry would be found provided with a fresh wonder to relate. The garden had a sleepy, dozy

## ROSNAH

look as it lay among its high box hedges. On one side it was bounded by the irregular ivy-covered Dower House, and the high wall of its quaint paved stable yard where ducks and chickens, a cow, a goat, some rabbits and a half dozen peacocks which should—but did not—adorn the terrace, abided in the loving care of Mrs. Jerry. There were also a pony and cart for the Duchess and a varying number of saddle hacks. These were cared for by a nephew of Mrs. Jerry's—"a young boy with no great sinse, God be good to him" as his aunt frankly admitted, recently promoted from the humbler walks of herding cattle *vice* Tim O'Connell "gone off wid himself to be a futman up at the great house. An' her little Grace and his young Lordship just havin' him instructed in the ways of carin' for horses. It's the whole army he'll be conceiting himself to be, with his horse and fut, bedad."

To the north the garden was enclosed by a stone wall nine feet in height, beyond which lay the road. Upon this wall Jerry had trained and trailed his pear trees to a wonderful flatness of form and perfection of blossom and fruit. To the south and west it lay open to the sunshine and the Park of Avonmere, whose lawns and trees adjoined its flowers with only an occasional group of shrub or tall-growing rose to mark the boundary.

Placid and safe as these four acres looked they

## ROSNAH

fairly seethed, according to Jerry, with adventure from sun to sun. A rosebud, "the third one on the second bush beyont the rosydandrums, my Lady," just on the verge of opening had been "destroyed and distructed entirely by a long black wurrum as long as me arrum, your Grace, an' with the divil's own ugly face upon him. I thracted him to his hole and I kilt him; himself and his three pups."

"That was very brave of you," the Duchess would commend him with her heavenly smile.

Or perhaps his tale was all of joy unmixed with murder: "That quare creepery thing what was grow-in' for auld ages upon the buttery wall gettin' the best of care and water and showin' no more thought of a flower than a rake would, or a spade," had at last produced a small tight bud which hre Grace could see "if she stood on the tips of her toes. It would be gran' entirely in a day or so."

Jerry generally awaited his mistress, with the dogs of all sorts and ages which had attached themselves to the family, upon the terrace outside the French windows of the breakfast room. But on the morning after General Fitzgerald's levee his news was of so exciting a nature that he pressed his large red face in its setting of gray whiskers against one of these windows until his nose was flat and ghastly. The indignant parlor maid discouraged him with look and gesture, but he only glared the more intently

## ROSNAH

and waved a beckoning hand. The Duchess, noting the shadow cast upon the patch of sunlit carpet, looked up and saw its cause.

"Let him come in," she told the maid, who obeyed with a jerk of her pink cotton skirts and a shake of her white capped head.

"Well, Jerry, what is it to-day?" asked her Grace when he had bowed his greeting. "Is there something new in the garden?"

"There is, your honor, ma'am," he responded. "There's two of thim in it down near the gooseberry bushes. They kem in from the Park as plisant as ye plase and herself so set up with herself and himself so took up with her that I hadn't the heart to give thim warnin'. They think it's a part of the Park they're in."

The Duchess sprang to command.

"Go out and talk nicely to them, Jerry," she charged him. "Don't tell them where they are and don't let them get away before I come. Mr. Lovell, will you run out to the summer house and reconnoiter? See if they look like my new tenants, if they have an air of being quite at home and all that sort of thing. Adelaide," she laughed when Lovell had gone to execute his mission, "was there ever such luck? 'They have walked into my garden said the spider to the fly.' I shall go out and talk to them and be nice. Do I look nice? Is my hair quite right?"

## ROSNAH

Do you think they'll like me and ask us up to lunch?"

"Your hair is quite right," Adelaide assured her, "and I think it's very likely that they will."

"I have the honor to report," said John Lovell returning, "that my old friend, Desmond Fitzgerald, is in the garden with a lady."

"A young lady?" questioned the Duchess.

"She seems to be young. I saw only her back; a parasol hid her head and shoulders."

"How fortunate it's the one you know," the Duchess beamed. "Now you and I will stroll toward the gooseberry bushes. You will be amazed to discover your friend. You will present him to me. He will present his sister. I shall present mine, who by that time will be appearing round the hawthornes, and the thing will be done. I'm so glad, Mr. Lovell, that you went to Cambridge. You saved my life by doing so. Are you ready? Where's my basket? And my flower scissors? Adelaide, you may follow us in exactly seven minutes. Boys, no lessons for an hour or so. Lead on, Macduff."

But she waited for no leading. She sped down paths of tall, sweet scented box, she turned sharp angles and she crossed hallowed flower beds. Only when she approached the trespassers did she pause to take breath and to warn her quick following companion:

"Remember now, you're to look surprised, wonder-

## ROSNAH

fully surprised," and she marvelled at the completeness of his obedience. A man who could so order the expression of his face, his eyes, his very figure ought to be on the stage, the Duchess of Clontarf reflected. He was transformed with wonder and delight. The other man coming to meet them showed no such transports of surprise though he seemed genuinely glad to see his friend and decorously glad to be presented to the Duchess. It was fortunate that these greetings and introductions should have taken some time and that the young lady of the parasol was not called upon for instant speech or action. If the Duchess had been in quest of blank amazement and a little fear, she might have found them at the time when Desmond Fitzgerald's companion first saw Lovell. Also if it had not been her habit to look straight and frankly at whoever she chanced to be talking to, she might have seen a whole code of signals exchanged between Mr. Lovell and the white clad stranger. But she saw none of these things and when Desmond Fitzgerald introduced his sister: "the only one I've ever had and I've had her for only a few hours," she was graciously ready to take the tall young beauty's hand and to bid her welcome to Avonmere.

"Mr. Lovell and I have met before," Lady Rosnah remarked. "He was tutor to my friends the Creightons."

## ROSNAH

Then Adelaide, prompt to her cue, came upon the scene and immediately struck up talk and gossip of London with the grave Queen's Council while the Duchess stood by to laugh and to encourage them. Suddenly Adelaide wheeled upon the girl:

"Didn't I see you at the Potters' last year, the night the Prince of Wales was there?" she demanded.

There was no immediate answer and Desmond turned to his sister. He met her eyes, full of a distress whose poignancy amazed him and he answered for her:

"Sheila has never been to London, nor out of Ireland at all in fact," said he, making her confession of provincialism as one who defied his hearers to think patronizingly of her on its account. "She is very young. But perhaps, if Lady Mary can spare her, she may spend some months with me in the Spring."

"She ought," said the brisk Adelaide. "She's the type they admire there. There was a girl at the Potters' that night I spoke of almost exactly like her. Absolutely surrounded three deep, she was, and wall flowers all about. Do take her to London, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"There is nothing I should like better," Desmond observed as he and the two sisters moved away, leaving Rosnah and Lovell together. "But I fear that my mother would object to parting with her and she



## ROSNAH

seems to have already created a most favorable impression upon the General."

"Good gracious!" observed Miss Lytton with some heat. "I should think a beautiful creature like that might create a favorable impression upon almost anyone."

"She is delicious," quoth the Duchess. "Did you ever see anyone blush so becomingly? I wonder why she did it, though."

"It seems a characteristic of hers," Desmond answered. "I watched her rather closely at dinner last evening and again this morning at breakfast. She looks at one sometimes when one asks her a question and simply blushes instead of answering. But, as you say, it is not unbecoming."

## VIII

**T**HERE is a bench just here," said John Lovell, "will you sit down? I want a few words with you."

"I shall be delighted," said his companion and, settling herself comfortably, but to the best advantage, she made room for him beside her. "I know you're going to scold me," she sighed. "You always looked like this when you were going to. But please don't dear, dear Mr. Lovell, just when I've found

## ROSNAH

you again. You were always terribly conscientious about disciplining me, but don't do it now. Sit down here beside me and tell me what you've been doing ever since you left Glencora. I had a heavenly year in London and on the Continent with different relatives and friends. And, whisper and promise never, never to tell. I was that girl at the Potters'. The girl Miss Lytton spoke of. I was staying there for three weeks and they gave that ball for me. Wasn't that a narrow escape?"

"I had guessed as much. The ambuscade of men three deep was a good clue."

"That was dreadful exaggeration," she assured him prettily. "There were only six or seven. They used to like to talk to me because, they protested, I was so astonishingly well educated. Nearly all the other girls had had governesses and had been mewed up in school rooms. So you mustn't hold me responsible for those seven men, Mr. Lovell. They were entirely your fault. You had made me so learned."

But no tutor had taught her the coquetry, the fascination, the gaiety, the sweet provocative earnestness which made her at once so delightful and so dangerous. She shone in her setting of green leaf and yellow flower—the bench was shaded by Jerry's pet laburnum—like a larger and more lovely blossom. She, too, was dressed all in soft white and yellows from her wide hat to her trim skirts. Indian

## ROSNAH

embroidered muslin formed the basis of the gown. She had bought it in Paris the year before, but Lady Mary had that morning ecstatically recognized it as her three years' ago gift to Sheila. "But it is even more elaborate than I remembered it," she had marvelled, and the girl felt a touch of self scorn as she made some misleading explanation. Somehow there was no triumph in deceiving the kind little lady who was so gentle, so solicitous, so earnest.

"Do, Mr. Lovell," she repeated now, "sit down nicely here beside me and be kind to me. I'm a little bit lonely. So you won't be censorious, will you, Mr. Lovell?"

But Lovell would have none of her blandishments. He stood before her, looking down into the pleading and the mockery of her face.

"I'm not going to scold you," he replied gently—"my right to do that ended long and long ago—"

"It's only eighteen months," she corrected him.

"It has seemed sufficiently long to me," he answered. "And sufficiently short for what I had to do."

"What was that?" she asked kindly.

"Nothing permanent. It is all undone again now. But I hope you will allow me to ask for some explanation of this masquerade, Lady Rosnah."

"Don't call me that," she cried. "You mustn't

## ROSNAH

call me that. Didn't you hear that I am Sheila Fitzgerald?"

"And don't I know that you are not? Where is Miss Sheila? Why is she not here? And why are you?"

"I'll tell you," she promised, "but not if you are going to storm and stamp. I am really very good and charitable and agreeable, you know, and I ought to be encouraged and praised."

"I must confess to not knowing what you are," her mentor answered. "May I once more ask you to explain?"

Lovell was comparatively quick to appreciate the situation but distinctly slow to approve of it.

"Am I to understand," he asked somewhat coldly, "that you propose to live upon terms of sisterly intimacy with these men of whom you know absolutely nothing?"

"I know all about them," she made rebellious answer. "I've heard about them from Sheila and Miss Stewart until I feel as though I were as much related to them as Sheila is. I've been studying all the letters they ever wrote to Glencora—Sheila gave them to me before I left home—and you would be proud to see how well I get on. Again it shows how well trained I am. I've not yet made a really serious mistake. I never did anything half so interesting and exciting. There was one moment last night—it was

## ROSNAH

when I had to walk down a hideously long room while they all stayed at the extreme end of it and watched me—that I thought of running away and letting them discover about Sheila and Kevin. But I got through the first half hour, somehow, and after that we were all as friendly as possible; not one of them even faintly suspects me.”

Lovell paced impatiently up and down before the bench during this recital and slashed at spray after spray of the sheltering laburnum. The flowers fell over Lady Rosnah in a golden hail and she made careful designs with them upon her white clad knee as she went on:

“One of us sings very well and paints quite astonishingly. He is going to do me—life size—as a present for mamma.”

“Indeed?” commented Lovell.

“Yes, and my youngest brother, Owen, has already begun a sonnet about me. He showed me the first few lines before breakfast. He says I remind him of a statue of Saint Cecilia in some old church he went to. And then, there is my brother Lawrence. I like my brother Lawrence very much indeed. He is afraid of me, but he admires me. He told mother that I was a remarkably promising colt and that they’d better get a very good trainer for me—someone with a light hand—because I had a bit of a temper and a mouth like velvet.”

## ROSNAH

"What did he say? Tell me that again," said Lovell harshly.

"A mouth like velvet," she repeated with innocent eyes on his sombre ones. "That's an expression among horsey men, you know. And I might as well admit—since you'll be meeting him—that my brother Lawrence is horsey."

"But how does *he* know?" Lovell insisted. "You don't mean to tell me that you—I won't say it: I can't say it—I know it can't be true—"

The girl ignored this plea for a word of denial and went serenely on:

"And it is only fair to tell you that papa has a temper. Also he—occasionally—uses language of the warmest kind. 'I give ye me word, Miss,' the footman, a *rara avis*, told me this morning, 'something wint agin his temper yisterday and bedad the words of him blithered the paint of the new carriage waitin' in the drive to go to meet Mister Desmond, an' it rainin' teems at the time.'"

"I can see it all," said Lovell halting before her. "Even the footman, poor chap, you can't let alone. You insist upon adulation from every one about you. I remember that even Kevin had no spirit where you were concerned. But go on; you've not told me your opinion of Desmond."

"You formed that long and long ago," said she demurely but with a less easy railery. "Of course

## ROSNAH

I find him all you used to describe him to us. You know how often you told me of the charms and virtue of your friend."

"And because he is my friend," John Lovell responded hotly, all in a moment losing control of his temper, "because he is my friend I shall allow myself the honor of introducing him to my pupil, the Lady Rosnah Creighton."

She stood up and her cool eyes were nearly on a level with his angry ones as she answered:

"You will do nothing of the kind."

"I shall. Why not?"

"Because when you do your pupil will instantly return to Glencora and it will be another eighteen months—or years—before you see her again. Have you thought of that at all, Mr. Lovell?"

For a breath's space she held his gaze with hers. Then:

"During the last eighteen months," said he, "you have grown very clever. I wonder if it be an improvement, Miss Fitzgerald."

## IX

**W**HILE Rosnah and Desmond were gathering friends and gossip at the Dower House the other members of the Fitzgerald family were also enjoying the beauty and novelty of their surround-

## ROSNAH

ings. Lady Mary and Owen were wandering through the greenhouses, Gerald and his father paced up and down upon the terrace. As they walked the General smoked long black cheroots and cast baffled, annoyed glances at the supercilious young man beside him. In a morning costume of a tan so light as to be almost cream color and bound with a wide black braid the appearance of Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald was, to say the least, unusual. A life spent in the stereotyped uniforms prescribed by the Queen does not prepare the mind of elderly Generals to welcome such variants from the ordinary as a shirt of soft green silk with a low rolling collar and a loosely knotted tie of the same material. In the eyes of artistic Paris they might have denoted originality, taste, independence of mind. In the eyes of "Cross Fitzgerald" they meant license, almost anarchy.

The General flattered himself that his own costume was a triumph of the conventional. His tailor, a long suffering person in Bond Street, had assured him that everyone in that Spring of 1880 was wearing shepherds' plaids. And so, with a wistful memory of the red and gold in which he had sweltered under tropical suns he had arrayed himself in a shepherds' plaid of the most vivid black and white, white spots and a white beaver hat—which subdued haberdashery his tailor had prescribed as the proper



## ROSNAH

costume for a summer's morning in the country. The result when surveyed in the long glass in his dressing room had been rather a trial to his vanity. Cagney surveyed the same reflection with an eye which seemed to say that, under the circumstances, he had done all that could be expected of him. If he had spoken he might have added that he derived as little pleasure from his own quiet livery as the General did from the faultlessly cut shepherds' plaid.

"You may lay out my dress uniform this afternoon," the General ordered. "I promised Miss Sheila to put it on. She tells me she was greatly disappointed not to see me in it last evening. She doesn't, of course, know the regulations. But there can be no harm in wearing it for an hour or two to give pleasure to a charming young lady. And my medals, too," he added. "Get them all out of my dressing case. She is so much interested in all I can remember of the actions I was in. We never thought, did we Cagney, when you took her down to Bombay, that she would grow into such a fine young lady before we saw her again?"

"She's a jewel of light," answered Cagney in a Cork accent which neither the heat nor the hills of India had modified one whit. "You'd think so if you was to see her and Mr. Desmond goin' off with themselves under her white 'brolley after breakfast. 'Cagney,' says she, as pleasant as if it was only yester-

## ROSNAH

day she was ridin' round the compounds on me shoulder with her little arm around me neck and me holdin' on to her little scraps of legs. 'Cagney, will you remind the General, my father, that he has promised to ride with me after luncheon,' she says."

"The man who could forget an appointment with that lovely creature deserves to be blown from the cannon's mouth," cried the General. "Cagney—"

"Yis, sorr."

"Which of my riding suits is most becoming to me?"

"Your green, sorr. It fits your figure better and gives you a youthfuller look altogether, sorr."

"You may lay it out," said the General. "And look to the boots."

"I will sorr," answered Cagney, and the General had nearly reached the door before the servant spoke again. "I'm wonderin'," he insinuated, "if it would be took in the light of a liberty if I was to put on my ould red coat, too, at the same time. A Gineral," he pointed out "had rightly ought to have a aide and maybe ye wouldn't mind—for the want of a better—lettin' me stand behind you like I was goin' to go of messages for you. The red would be a little bit brighter," urged Cagney deferentially, "if there was two of us in it an' maybe Miss Sheila might get a better idea from it."

## ROSNAH

The General hesitated, undecided, and Cagney went on artfully:

"An' as for the stories of the medals. Sure who could be tellin' her them better nor me. You'd always be makin' little of the things ye got them for. I'd tell her God's truth an' that's what nobody knows but me."

"Very well," the General acquiesced suddenly, "we'll show those boys of mine that there's nothing a woman—white or brown—loves more than a red coat and a gold button. As who could know better than you and I, Cagney, after thirty-five years of the life. And damme, sir," cried General Fitzgerald, "we ought to give her a little pleasure. We owe it to her. She's a——fine woman. Cagney, did I tell you that she is the very living image of my poor mother?"

Cagney busied himself with tissue paper, chamois, pipe-clay, and regrets that the General had not, for the sake of those who saw him often, resembled his maternal ancestor; while that hard faced warrior descended to smoke with his second son upon the terrace. They had been talking of Sheila when Gerald remarked:

"But where did she get that manner? So gracious! So calm! Such a dainty little lady! Such an air of the *je ne sais quoi* that—"

"Stop, sir," stormed the General suddenly flaring

## ROSTNAH

up. "I'll not allow you to talk like that about your sister. I won't allow you to talk to me upon any subject if you can't express yourself in the Queen's English. If it's good enough for me and for thousands—yes millions—of men like me it's good enough for you. And if you can't open your mouth without making unintelligible and objectionable remarks—"

"Objectionable?" repeated Gerald.

"Yes, — objectionable. I object to them. I object to whatever I don't understand."

Gerald looked at him. The General cannot have understood the look for he furiously objected to it.

"And I won't," he stormed on, "allow you to address your sister except in English. What do I know of you, sir, and of your life, that I should allow you to communicate secretly with my daughter? I shall not allow you to address my sweet child in the tongue of the polluted country in which my brother has chosen to live—"

"Sheila speaks French perfectly," Gerald submitted. "She—"

"Then your Aunt Patricia ought to be ashamed of herself, sir. And if I hear you saying one more indelicate word in my house, I shall put you out of it, sir."

Again he met that uncomprehended look in his son's quiet eyes and again he stormed on:

"And if you say one word of that unclean lan-

## ROSNAH

guage in your mother's hearing I shall court martial you—sir," cried "Cross Fitzgerald." "I'll have you blown from the cannon's mouth. I'm master of my house, sir, and nothing shall go on in it that I don't understand and approve of, sir."

"Don't you think," suggested Gerald, "that this sort of thing is bad for your liver—this excitement, I mean? I should take medical advice if I were you," and he sauntered into the house leaving the General purple faced and profane upon the gravel.

At this unpropitious moment there entered upon the scene from the direction of the stables his son Lawrence Fitzgerald in enormously baggy breeches, muddy boots and horseshoe scarf pin. He was one of those people always eager to say the right thing and never by any chance hitting upon it. Seeing his father now so seeming hot and breathless he proffered sympathy and aid:

"It's the sun, sir, has got you into this state," said he. "Let me take you into the shade. Come away out of the heat with me. There now, quiet now," he continued as his patient seemed restlessly inclined. "You'll be as fresh as paint in a minute. But the sun is awful," he admitted when he had led his father into the shade of a wide sycamore on the lawn. "Be the powers, I'm boiled myself. Easy now, easy now," he went on in the manner which had

## ROSNAH

proven irresistible to many an excited horse, "you'll only be the worse if you go on like this."

By "like this" Lawrence referred to the spasmodic and seemingly uncontrollable way in which his father bit his cheroot in two and cast the fragments away; tugged at his cuffs; pulled at his cravat; jerked his legs into greater conformity with the master-piece from Bond Street in which they were encased and swore uninterruptedly. Finding his soothing of no avail Lawrence left his suffering parent under the sycamore tree and set out in search of aid and council while the General stormed on with fresh energy:

"The speech of a hostler! The manners of a boor. Good Gad, what a son! An oaf! An untrained oaf! What is the family coming to? A fop and an oaf. One son who looks and speaks like a dancing master and another like a groom."

His reflections had reached this gloomy point when he heard laughter and voices and his face cleared; for across the perfect lawn came his daughter, his perfect daughter, slim and cool and sweet. And with her was his oldest son, fit brother for such a daughter; tall and thin and clever looking. With them also were two other ladies and the General recognizing his "landlord" and the sister of his friend Jack Lytton advanced upon the group, suave, well mannered and erect, but under evident and iron-willed self-restraint.

## ROSNAH

The Duchess of Clontarf resisted the most cordial invitation to remain for luncheon. She met the entire family and charmed them all, but she wanted to escape and compare impressions with the cool-eyed Adelaide. Even the gentle pleadings of Lady Mary were of no avail but she promised to come up at tea time—and to bring the boys—to see the General in his uniform. This had been Rosnah's suggestion, and though the General pooh-poohed it with great modesty, he was at last overborne by the pretty clamor and insistence of the ladies and strutted off, greatly pleased with himself, for a further interview with Cagney.

## X

**F**OR a year or two Desmond Fitzgerald had been vaguely conscious that his life lacked something; fell somewhere short of that finish and completeness which he had reached in all the less important things and had somehow missed in life as a whole. His unmarried friends had told him that he wanted more feminine companionship and society. His married friends had prescribed a wife. But he had shrunk with an antiquated distaste from the one prescription and with a selfish procrastination from the other. There was plenty of time, he told him-

## ROснаh

self, to assume the responsibilities, the curtailment of leisure, the partition of pleasure, which marriage would entail. The very obvious lures set for his feet by ambitious mothers of numerous daughters may have further deterred him. The premature action of two fathers who "asked him his intentions" while they were in an entirely nebulous state had much the same effect and he had gone on "growing more fastidious and less desirable every year," as his candid friend Jack Lewis had told him.

And after all, he thought, as he paced the terrace waiting for Rosnah and the General to return from their ride, after all the men had been right. A man should have a woman as a friend, adviser, companion. Already, as he mused, his sister had been of service to him. How easy and simple the meetings of the morning had been made by her! The Dower House episode had gone so pleasantly! How cleverly she had drawn the General out of his evident rage and into the greatest affability of which he was capable. How tactfully she had suppressed Lawrence, exploited Owen and encouraged Lady Mary. How gracious she was with the servants and how perfect her greeting of Ameera had been. The poor old native woman had been so piteously and dumbly glad to see all her babies grown now to man's estate; had listened so eagerly to their stammering attempts at Hindustani; had been so nervous and puzzled by



## ROSNAH

these tall "*Huzzoors*" who stood awkwardly about their mother's dressing room striving to make conversation with her. Then Sheila came. A long flounce trailed after her had been torn deliberately, Desmond suspected, from her dainty India muslin and with the prettiest mixture of confidence, affection and distress, she held it out to Ameera.

"Oh! Mai," she cried, "just see what I've done!" And the four brothers soon after filed out leaving the old woman happily busy over her new and lovely "mem."

She met everyone with the same perfect unaffectedness. The Duchess, her two long-legged boys, Miss Lytton, John Lovell. But here Desmond Fitzgerald paused in his satisfaction. She had chatted gaily and unreservedly to Lovell under the laburnum tree. She had shown him a cordiality as sweet as that she had shown the little Duchess, and avowed her earlier knowledge of him and indebtedness to him without embarrassment. There was no shade in her voice or in her eyes which showed that she remembered that the fellow was a tutor; a hireling; and he had seemed to ignore the fact as thoroughly as she had. But Desmond Fitzgerald was not prepared to let anyone, even a friend, monopolize his sister. All she wanted was the merest hint of warning. She would know what to do. And the warning must be given without hurting her. Desmond could promise himself

## ROSNAH

diplomacy enough for that. Twice already he had tried to approach the subject and twice failed.

Presently she came to him, fresh from Ameera's hands, and as he watched the graceful dignity with which she moved he found her altogether desirable. How her young beauty would brighten his model, but subdued, bachelor establishment; how pleasant it would be to watch the surprise of his friends when he should say: "My sister," and she should bid them welcome and do the honors of his house.

The sun was near its setting. Far away across the valley the mountains rose soft and blue against the sky. Nearer were the meadows marked out almost like a chessboard into little stone-walled fields, some green, some almost black where the plough had been. There was too much green, too little black. For ploughs and men were scarce in the Ireland of that time.

Rosnah looked wistfully out over the green spaces and sighed. Here again were poverty and desolation; here so near Dublin, the capital of the country and, one would imagine, so near relief. Yet the village she had ridden through with the General was not a shade more prosperous than remote Kilgoggan. The same patient apathy was stamped on the faces, the same listless, hopeless waiting, drew the people to door or window and brought the children out upon the road. Surely, very surely, thought the girl, it

## ROSNAH

was "the most distressful country that ever yet was seen."

"Desmond, you've lived a long time in England where the laws come from," she said as they paced side by side in the soft light; "will you tell me what all this misery means? What is wrong with this poor country? Where does the fault lie?"

"Oh! if one only knew. Some say here, some there. But this much I can tell you, Sheila, the 'Irish Question' whose existence our father denies, is monopolizing a great deal of time in both houses. I went the other night to hear a speech by Parnell in the lower house. A chap called Dillon spoke after him and between them they quite made one uncomfortable. Parnell was calm, sarcastic, full of facts and figures, a statesman, a scholar, but no orator. And after him came Dillon. The sort of fellow one imagines Peter the Hermit to have been. Long black hair, big black eyes, and he looks as though some fire was raging in him. As though it had consumed everything but the mere shell of the man and might come blazing through that at any moment."

"I know the look!" exclaimed Rosnah. "Our Owen has it. Haven't you noticed it? And you'll find it in pictures of Robert Emmet. It frightens me to see how Owen flashes and darkens. It may mean trouble for us all."

## ROснаH

"I hardly think so. You know he's very young."

"And very delicate."

"And very delicate. But John Dillon had just that fragile, hectic look and yet he has been in this agitation, or in the papers at least, for a number of years. I wish you might have heard the speech he made that night. The man's a poet. He made me want to do something, anything, to relieve the distress he painted so heart-breakingly. He quite possessed me. It was days before I could argue myself out of the idea that I ought to give up my practice and come over here to consecrate my life to the principle of 'Ireland for the Irish.' Isn't it a noble sentiment, Sheila?" he ended half laughing at his own enthusiasm.

"It is, indeed," she answered. "I'm sorry you didn't stay consecrated."

"And my first duty," laughed Desmond, "would have been to slay our worthy parent, the General. Patriotism, like charity, should begin at home, and he is an official of the Government. He was made Justice of the Peace last week. He thought it befitting to the position of an Irish landed gentleman to write J. P. after all his more warlike titles."

"'Come they in peace or come they in war,'" quoted Rosnah, "he will still be ready for them. But I hope it won't be war, Desmond," she went on with sudden gravity, as Lawrence hurried out to report

## ROSNAH

that the General and Cagney were clanking down the stairs in full uniform and that the party from the Dower House was in the drawing room. Desmond, as he followed them, reflected with some curiosity that this was the third occasion since morning upon which he had intended to discuss John Lovell with Sheila, and had somehow had the conversation taken out of his control.

## XI

**T**HE little review was a great success. Lady Mary had appropriately ordered tea to be served and candles to be lighted in the gun room, and there Rosnah and Desmond found the whole party assembled.

The Duchess presented her boys to the Fitzgeralds with a pretty air of the proud matron which contrasted piquantly with her slim figure in its costume of green broadcloth. The young Duke's surliness thawed in the sunshine of Lady Mary's smile. Lord Eric was instantly *en rapport* with everyone in the room, but he seemed, to his mother's distress and his Aunt Adelaide's amusement, to prefer Cagney to all of them. The boys were dressed alike, in Eton costumes with wide turned down collars and short tailless coats; surely the most trying garb ever invented

## ROSNAH

to clothe a boy at the already trying time of hobble-dehoyhood. But they bore this disadvantage surprisingly well.

The General and the attendant Cagney, whose impersonation of "a aide" would have served as a model to many a youngster with a commission bought for him and an appointment made for him, stood before one of the wide windows. Lady Mary took her ministering place at the tea table in a flutter of pride and hospitality; the Duchess, Adelaide and Rosnah in their soft dresses brightened the scene, and the young Fitzgeralds in the afternoon attire prescribed for their sex and station stood or sat about and were dutifully extinguished by their resplendent sire and the hardly less gorgeous Cagney.

Rosnah was Mistress of Ceremonies and Lady Mary was Chorus. She insisted with a fond and loyal pride upon such parts of the recital as redounded most to the glory of her dear General, and whenever that Ulysses flagged in his Odyessy and demanded tea and crumpets there was Cagney ready to contribute illuminating and picturesque remarks.

One by one Rosnah imperiously pointed out the medals on the General's breast, or on Cagney's, and demanded the full and circumstantial story of why they chanced to be there. And obediently the two old soldiers, urged by Lady Mary and cheered by the plaudits of the ladies and by the attention of

## ROSNAH

the younger men, stormed red-walled cities, resisted night attacks, lurked in ambuscades, rode gaily forward to horrible and unfear'd death; endured long marches and short rations, met fevers, tigers, natives, streaming darkness and blinding heat, all with an unconcern, a bravery, a dare-deviltry, which made the adventures their own reward even without these glittering memorials. Their stories covered the dark years of the great Sepoy mutiny and to hear these men tell of the horrors of that time made the young Fitzgeralds realize what danger and terror might be.

"And now," commanded Rosnah at last, "tell us why they gave you this scrubby little black one," and she pointed to a Maltese Cross of bronze hung on a parti-colored ribbon.

"By the Lord, Miss," cried Cagney; and—

"My dear Sheila," cried Lady Mary; "that's the very best of all. That's the Victoria Cross."

"I knew it," the girl laughed. "I was only joking. Tell me how you got it, papa. I can read your name and the date, September 14th, 1857. What happened then?"

"The Fall of Delhi," whispered Lady Mary. No passage of time, no years of happiness could dim her memory of that day.

"That was for nothing much," the General made hasty assurance. "You see everyone was a bit excited. John Nickolson, the greatest soldier we ever

## ROSNAH

had in India, was commanding us. The siege was up. All these weary months of waiting ended. And we rather made fools of ourselves in the excitement. That's how it was."

"Begging your pardon, sir," Cagney interrupted. "I know, and Lady Mary knows, and the young gentlemen ought to know and Miss Sheila must be taught to know that the Victoria Cross is not given for 'nothing much.'"

"Then *you* tell us how it was," urged Rosnah and Cagney, standing very stiff and still behind the General, told the tale.

Stripped of technicalities, of discussions between the hero and the teller of the story, of amplifications by Lady Mary and disclaimers by General Fitzgerald, it was made clear that on that eventful 14th of September when the English under such men as Home, Salkeld, Nickolson and Jacobs, fought and blasted their way into the red city so long held by the mutineers it chanced that a certain gate across a certain lane lay between Burn Bastion and the breaches already made in the wall.

The General had been but a Major then. With three men he had set forward to place bags of powder against the foot of this gate. Two of the three men dropped their burdens and ran back. The third man and the Major had waited to set all things fairly, to push the bags close under the pierced



## ROSNAH

stone of the gateway, even to exchange a bantering word with the dark faced soldiers beyond it before lighting the fuse. The gate was blown to atoms; the houses round about were shattered; and the red-coated Englishmen poured through the opening and went on to fight, to curse, to avenge their slaughtered women and children until they came upon the European quarter with its European shops and its European drinks. And then they fought no more.

"An' the General, God bless him, came through that day with only a slaughtered arm to show he was ever in it. An' a day or two later we found her Ladyship disguised as a native woman—in the best of health, though uneasy in her mind—livin' with Ameera, her *ayah*, over near the Cabul gate. An' when the Queen came to hear of it she sent the Victoria Cross to the Major."

"Splendid!" cried Rosnah, "splendid! Oh! I'm so proud of you, papa."

"And the third man?" questioned Owen.

"The poor fellow was killed," answered Lady Mary. "But when we heard that there was talk of your father being decorated he insisted that the third man deserved the same reward. So the Cross was sent home to his people."

"What was his nationality?" asked Desmond.

"Irish, to be sure," responded Cagney promptly. "Nearly all them Crosses is given to the Irish. It's

## ROSNAH

the most Catholic nation ye se," he added with a grin.

"And the fondest of fighting," submitted Owen. "Tell us another story, sir."

But the General was tired of making himself agreeable. He had never been proficient in the art and the story of the fourth man at Delhi saddened him. Like many another essentially heartless man he satisfied his own ideal of his character by cherishing a few alien and quite superfluous sensibilities. So now with an impressive show of emotion and pocket handkerchief he took his place beside the little Duchess and allowed himself to be flattered and soothed.

## XII

**A** WEEK passed and the strangely assorted house party adjusted itself to its relations, yet Mr. Lovell's pupil hesitated to announce her identity and to explain her presence at Avonmere. She was not, she assured herself, afraid. She was only amused by the outbreaks of the peppery General's peppery temper before which Lady Mary quailed. And still she hesitated. It would be such a pity, she again assured herself, to go ignominiously back to Glencora before she should have completed the exceedingly interesting experiment of being a sister to

## ROSNAH

an austere and high principled Queen's Council. It was her duty to stay until he should be entirely humanized. It was manifestly wrong that a man of so much charm, intellect and ability should be allowed to hover on the border of misogyny. She had dedicated herself to the task of reclaiming him and in this pious undertaking she encountered but one obstacle: the imperturbable, the watchful, the jealous John Lovell.

This watchfulness served only to defeat itself. Desmond, having found a sister so entirely to his liking, had no intention of allowing her to be monopolized by any other man; and Lovell, though himself of course entirely out of the question as a suitor for his sister, yet suggested the distasteful thought that suitors might some day appear and that it behooved a brother to make his companionship as engaging as might be before other claimants should arise.

He was therefore somewhat dismayed to discover that Rosnah was holding in her heart a hope of some day returning to Glencora.

"And you will go with me, will you not?" she urged on a day, a shy pensive Irish day, when one of their many rides together had brought them to an old Abbey which had been already a ruin when history was young. They had tied the horses in what had once been the chapel and had climbed up to a shelf of stone which still clung to one of the ivy-covered

## ROSNAH

walls and showed where the cells had been. A smaller shelf, two feet above the first, had been the bed of so long a succession of holy men that their bodies had left an impress in the stone.

"Poor chaps!" mused Desmond as he sat beside Rosnah on the edge of the remaining floor and marked the dainty riding boots, the slender hands and the beautiful face so close to his. "Poor old chaps! There wasn't much in life for them."

"And you would have turned into something quite as bad if I hadn't found you," returned the girl. "And, having found you, I want to exhibit you. Say you will go to Glencora with me," she urged, thinking that there he would be enlightened without any effort on her part. "I should so love to show it all to you. The Park, the dear old house, and Kevin—"

She realized instantly the gravity of this mistake and even if she had not, one glance at his face would have warned her. And his voice was very cold as he asked:

"Young Creighton?"

She nodded.

"You are attached to those friends of yours?"

Again she nodded.

"I heard of the Creightons in London. The daughter was there last year. What's this her name is?"

"Rosnah."

## ROSNAH

"And the boy's name?"

"Kevin."

"What sort of a boy is he?"

"Perfectly delightful," she cried in a sudden spasm of homesickness. "Tall and handsome and brave and simple. The dearest boy in the world. Oh! I wish you could see him. I am so proud of him."

"My dear Sheila," said Desmond gravely, "it is safe to indulge in such raptures to me. I am your brother. I understand you;" and then thinking he detected the flash of a smile in her demureness, he added: "You may think it impossible in so short a time, but you must remember, little sister, that I have known a great many people and that a girl fresh from the school room is no enigma to a man of the world."

"I suppose," said his dutiful sister—she was weaving a chaplet of ivy leaves and tendrils and her eyes were busy with her work—"that you have met dozens of girls just like me."

"I have, indeed," he assured her promptly; a shade too promptly for so experienced a man of the world. When he tried to retrieve the blunder, she was laughing softly and she turned off his attempt at justification with an ease not usually learned in the school room.

"And knowing the world as I do," he resumed so

## ROSNAH

gravely and so kindly that his gravity communicated itself to her, "I want to warn my sister against some of the dangers she may meet there. It is not kind to its tender hearted, impulsive children. It misunderstands innocent enthusiasm. It would, for instance, take exception to your very natural affection for your boy friend, young Lord Kevin."

"For Kevin," she marvelled with such a depth and wealth of tenderness that Desmond started and turned to scan her face more closely. There were tears, actually tears, in her beautiful eyes, and, as he stared at her aghast, they dropped slowly, forlornly over her cheeks.

Never in all his decorous life had Desmond Fitzgerald been so moved. Unknown impulses awoke in him, strange emotions stirred him. Pity, surprise and wrath fought with something stronger, more masterful, more fierce. Something which made his throat swell and his blood jump out of its accustomed rhythm. Brother and sister were silent until Desmond felt that his voice could be forced to speak only sympathy.

"Dear Sheila, I am glad you told me this. It is right that I should know. Can you trust me a little further and tell me whether this young fellow has ever said anything of a definite nature to you?"

"Nothing," answered Rosnah, laying her correct little hat upon the monk's hard couch and replacing

## ROSNAH

it with the wreath of shining green, "that a brother might not say to a sister. We were very fond of one another."

"Then it's high time that you had a real brother to be fond of," cried Desmond in great good humor now that his horrid fear had proved idle. "Do you think, little sister, that you could be fond of me?"

Her only answer was a vivid blush and a look of such embarrassment that he went reassuringly on:

"I am already both fond and proud of you. And I want you to take me as your favorite brother. To come to me when anything puzzles or annoys you. To let me offer you a word of help or advice and to promise not to be hurt or offended."

"Of course, I shall be only grateful," she responded and before he could guess her purpose she plucked the garland from her own bright head and crowned him with it, adding with a sudden smile: "Desmond, the wisest of us all. But it really ought to be laurel, you know."

"Then that's all right," said he with great satisfaction, amiably disentangling himself from his green honors. "Now we understand one another. And to test your sincerity, Sheila, I'm going to begin by asking you not to be quite so cordial to John Lovell. It is graceful of you, dear," said Desmond, who was intensely enjoying his new rôle and rapidly adjusting himself to its requirements, "but it is not wise."

## ROSNAH

You will mislead the poor chap into thinking that you care for him."

"But I do care for him," she avowed, feeling her feet once more on safe conversational ground. "I owe him more than I can ever repay."

"You mean in the matter of your education?"

"No, a greater, dearer debt. If it had not been for him I should never have known anything about you until the other night. But he was so fond of you, spoke so often and so admiringly of you, that I almost felt as though you were already my friend when I saw you standing there with all the others who seemed like strangers. I think," said this model sister, "that he was so particularly patient and painstaking with me on your account. We mustn't be ungrateful to him for that, must we?"

The little pronoun so casually pronounced gave Desmond entirely disproportionate pleasure. The difficult point had been reached and passed. She had accepted his advice angelically.

"But we must be careful," he warned, "not to make him fancy impossible things. And now one more word before we go down into the world again. Don't allow yourself to think too much about that young fellow at Glencora. He may be all that you say—I hope he is—but he comes of flighty stock. Everyone knows that the old Earl is eccentric and the daughter who was in town last season was an in-



## ROSTNAH

veterate coquette. As the only great heiress who had come out of Ireland for many and many an age she achieved a certain notoriety. Yes," said the learned Queen's Council judicially, "I congratulate myself that you are removed from the society of the Lady Rostnah Creighton. The companionship of that spoiled, extravagant, unscrupulous young woman would be the worst possible influence for you."

"I wonder, now," was her only response, as he drew out his watch and discovered that if they intended to be at home for luncheon, they would have to make a dash for it. But, as he helped her to her feet, she once more pleaded:

"Say you'll come to Glencora with me."

"I shall be delighted," he replied, "to exchange visits with you. I'll go to Glencora with you if you'll come to London with me. That would be only fair, you know."

## XIII

**L**ADY MARY FITZGERALD was happy. She would not have admitted to her own loyal heart that she was happy for the first time in her devoted and blameless life since she had left the home of the Earl, her father, to follow the rising fortunes of her soldier lover. During her sojourn in India

## ROSNAH

she had been practically friendless though everywhere beloved. Her husband had employed his leisure either in rebelling against his superiors or in fervidly abusing the men who served under him. He was rarely upon speaking terms with more than three members of his staff and he always insisted that his quarrel with a man should be followed by a complete rupture between Lady Mary and that man's wife.

"Smith's a cad," the General would say. "Avoid that fool of a wife of his if you please," or: "Did I see Jones' brat playing in the veranda? Don't let it occur again. I don't like that man's manner to me."

And presently she learned to form no intimacies.

But now she was at home. The General was no longer a man of strife. On the contrary, his new and peaceful title seemed to have colored his outlook upon life and he developed a gregarious and loquacious habit which would have amazed his former associates, had they been there to see. His wife accepted the change as a blissful part of life at home, as a direct answer to his prayers, and as proof positive that the dear General had a naturally charming disposition when wicked outsiders were not annoying him.

She loved to drive about in state with the General, or sometimes Rosnah, by her side and a whole sheaf

## ROSNAH

of cards in her card case to call upon the neighbors. She loved to drive into Dublin, bent upon shopping or visits, still with the General and often with one or two of her altogether satisfactory sons. Rosnah confessed to a strange dislike for Dublin and could but rarely be persuaded to join these expeditions. She loved to ride and drive about the lanes and fields with Desmond and with Lawrence, but the gaieties of Dublin possessed no attraction for her.

"I can't think why," Lady Mary often marvelled, "so pretty as she is and so young! And having spent all her life with Patricia! It is strange to find her so staid and so little interested in society."

"Not at all, not at all," the General would boom. "She inherits that from her grandmother. My poor dear mother was the same. She is extraordinary like my poor dear mother."

This new and beautiful social complaisance of the dear General's was in itself happiness for Lady Mary. And added unto this there was an atmosphere of love and admiration whose like she had never breathed. For the young Fitzgeralds, though they had varying opinions of their choleric father, were solidly at one in their appreciation of their pretty mother. They formed a little court about her. They respected her judgments and her preferences, deferred to her wishes, laughed at her little witticisms, listened to her stories and would move

## ROSNAH

heaven and earth—and the General—to carry out her slightest whim. But above all else they loved her. From morning until night she was the centre of interest. Would she drive with Lawrence? Would she care to have Desmond read for her from the papers which he had that morning received from London? He had marked one or two things which might interest her. Had she time to consult with Sheila about the trimming of a gown or the relief of Katy-parlor-maid's mother's rheumatism? Would she go up to the studio and smile her dear jolly smile for Gerald, who had nearly finished the eyes in her portrait, but thought they were getting too serious? Would she have time immediately—ah, but now this instant—to come down to the drawing room and write out for Owen an old song which a dear old woman in the village had taught him? No, please, he couldn't wait until Gerald had finished. He would forget it long before that. Couldn't she—wouldn't she come now?

And so the placid active days went by and Lady Mary Fitzgerald was loved and wanted. At any hour she might hear the call of "Mother," and she, who had not heard that name since Owen was a little child, would rise up, all blushing eagerness, whenever it reached her. She daily invented love words and pet names for her darlings. The General had never allowed an amatory vocabulary to be ap-

## ROSNAH

plied to him. To this new diversion she brought the unused enthusiasm and the constant longing of all the patient years.

Ameera shared in many of the sweet preoccupations of Lady Mary's new estate. She no longer crouched silently over the fire, sad eyed and empty-handed. There was now more to be done than there were hours to do it in, and she pattered busily about on her bare brown feet, smoothing out the glory of Lawrence Sahib's scarfs; revelling in the daintiness of Missy Sheila's bewildering furbelows and brushing her beautiful satin smooth hair; putting Gerald Sahib's rooms in order until he threatened to murder her if she touched so much as a twisted tube of paint. Forever mending and brushing, arranging, and folding, she passed from room to room to be thanked, laughed at, taught English, and generally made much of by her wonderful nurslings.

Her once pensive mem sahib began, under the tutelage of Rosnah and Gerald to take a lively interest in pretty things for her own adorning and the hour before dinner or a drive saw many a serious consultation in Lady Mary's dressing room or in Rosnah's. Through the general air of confidence, affection and light-heartedness which radiated from the *baba logue* Ameera moved in a dream.

So much everyone might see and know, but the secret of the nights were her own. It was then that

## ROSNAH

she would steal through the corridors and up the stairs, silent and dark as a shadow. It was then that the years were rolled back for her and the babies of the long ago restored. Then they were hers as she remembered them. Then she could listen to their soft breathing, put straight a pillow, touch an unconscious hand or a head that had often rested on her breast. The slightest change of wind or temperature sent her to tuck another blanket about her Owen *baba* or to shut out the draught which blew across Lawrence *baba's* bed. Day and night she loved them and served them, but it was at night that she loved them most; hovered and yearned over them; reclaimed them from the greedy years.

## XIV

**S**HEILA, dear," said Desmond to his sister, as they were idly knocking the balls about the billiard table, "what do you find to talk about to Lovell?"

"All sorts of things," answered she, "but principally, of course, Glencora and the people there."

"I wish you would talk to me a little about them," said Desmond. "Tell me about this Lady Rosnah Creighton. What sort of a girl is she?"

"That is a large question and a hard question ;

## ROSNAH

she is like herself ; she is a little like me ; she is like almost any girl of our sort and age."

Desmond accepted this in silence for a moment, and then :

"What does Lovell think of her? He taught her, did he not? Was he in love with her?"

"Well, sometimes we thought he was. Kevin thought so I know, and so did I. But I don't think he ever told her so. She says that a position like her's is a very helpless one. If she ever meets a really nice man he will think it his duty not to fall in love; or, if such a thing should occur, not to tell her so."

"On account of her money?" asked Desmond. "Is it then so very much?"

"Abominably much. Ever so many of her relatives have died in recent years and left their money to her, thinking that Kevin with the Earldom and the estates would have quite enough. So that now she finds herself in the ridiculous position of having a larger income than either her father or her brother and nothing to do with it. It is really very hard for a girl."

"I am afraid you waste your sympathy," he laughed. "She will find something to do with her money. And if report spoke true last year in London, she didn't suffer very keenly from a lack of proposals."

## ROSNAH

"She hated all those men in London, they were horrid old things who made a point of trying to marry any girl who could support them and who would wear their tarnished, spotted names. Why, Rosnah told me that she used to cry with humiliation when people expected her to be happy and proud. She says she is going to get rid of nearly all her money, and then look about until she finds a very nice man and propose to him herself."

"I think she is capable of it," he commented, "and she shouldn't have much difficulty in disposing of her money. Has she any definite plan?"

"She had one," the girl answered, "but it fell through. When she was in London the Governor General of Canada and she were great friends, and he told her about a place over there, oh! but the most wonderful paradise of a place, where the climate and the soil and everything is perfect, and where people could be as prosperous and as happy as the day is long, except that there were no people. So Rosnah made up her mind that she would transplant the village of Kilgoggan, our poor little village, you know; root and branch, grandfather and grandchild, including, of course, dear old Father Power. Now she could have spent a good deal of her money on that."

"She could, indeed," said Desmond, "and did she?"

"No, it was all very sad," answered the girl, "and



## ROSNAH

it really broke poor Rosnah's heart, for when she came back, all eagerness to tell the people about Canada and the health and independence that was waiting for them there, she found nobody to send, except the old, old people, and the young, young children. While she was away a recruiting sergeant came and took all our fine young fellows; and then a steamship company made some special prices for the passage to America, and all the girls—and all the boys who had not gone soldiering—went to New York to make their fortune. So what could poor Rosnah do? She couldn't get the young people back, and she couldn't send the old people alone. But worst of all she had lost her leader, the young doctor in the place."

"Smitten by her, too, I suppose," said Desmond.

"No, he was not," she contradicted with some spirit. "He had the good taste to prefer your sister; but he caught cold one night driving to see a sick old woman, who turned out, by the way, to have nothing at all the matter with her except a little imagination and a great fear of death, and in a week he was dead. It was a great blow to all of us, and to Aunt Patricia too, but *we* grew accustomed to the loss of him. His successor was quite as good a doctor. But that death was the death of Rosnah's plan. She always meant him to go with the people to keep them in order and take care of

## ROSNAH

them. She could not have sent them without a leader, and Father Power would have been quite as much at sea as any of them. They loved Doctor Collins. He could have managed them. He was an enthusiastic, poetical young chap, a little like our Owen. So now you see that even if Rosnah had her village to transplant, she would have no leader. So I suppose she will have to do something else with her money."

"Alas, poor creature, I suppose she will."

"Why do you talk like that?" she asked hotly. "As though you disliked Rosnah or doubted her sincerity. Do you *know* anything about her."

"I do not. Except that she is very rich and greatly spoiled. I do not care for the type. It is common enough in London."

"Oh! but you'd like her. I'm sure you would. I think you are beginning—quite unconsciously—to like her a little even now."

"You always speak so loyally of her that you almost tempt one to. But no. She shall never wear my scalp."

"And I," said the girl ruefully, "had it all so prettily arranged that you should fall in love with her."

"I'm afraid I've forgotten how to fall in love. If I ever knew how to do it. But from what I can remember and from what I read, the sensation is re-

## · ROSNAH

markably like what a staid and settled bachelor brother may feel for his altogether delightful sister when, after all a life's separation, she comes to him out of the shadows and puts her hands in his."

"Oh! please—"

"But my dear it is quite so. And amusing and amazing as it may seem to you, I am never happy unless you are near. I, who never used to be really happy except when I was alone. I am like a foolish old hen about you, I cackle in the most ridiculous fashion unless I know exactly where you are and exactly what you are doing. If you've ever read a description of the grand passion you will know that these are symptoms of it. And when I look forward to the coming years I find that I want nothing less or more of life than to have you always near me. That is another sign. And so I think you will have to evolve another suitor for your Lady Rosnah. I hope to be, for as many years as you and the fates will allow, otherwise engaged."

"Like dear old Tom Pinch," she suggested with ill-concealed uneasiness. "Wasn't he a darling?"

"He was, indeed, though I've only lately begun to understand him. And even now I can't quite make out his complacency about John Westlock. I'm afraid I could never love a John Westlock of yours. I cannot imagine myself playing grandly upon the organ in the twilight."

## ROSNAH

"Do you play the organ? How delightful?"

"I do not. And I have no organ. But if I had and if I did, I should not, as I have said, play grandly upon it in the twilight, while you and your John Westlock sat hand in hand in the window seat. I warn you not to expect it of me. I should very probably make myself intensely disagreeable to John. I might even go so far as to put him out into the twilight while I sat in the window seat and took care of that hand myself."

"But Tom Pinch never—"

"I know he did not. He was fond enough of that pretty little simpleton of a sister of his, but she was only a simpleton and he was already in love with Mary Graham. Whereas I—well, my sister is not a simpleton and I am fancy free. But don't let me catch any John Westlock about the place."

"Dragon?" laughed the girl. "Now your true duty would be to blind him to my faults, to point out my virtues and to demand his intentions."

## XV

**P**ETER, PETER CAREY!" cried the young footman looking importantly in at the door of the coach house at Avonmere which, like everything else in that establishment, was twice too large for any reasonable household. Peter Carey, the

## ROSNAH

coachman, was inspecting the General's carriages with the disparaging eye proper to his profession, and he gave no sign that he heard the eager summons. He opened the door of Lady Mary's brougham and poked a swart forefinger into its cushions, shaking his head resignedly the while. 'These tactics were intended solely to impress "that long young bosthoon of a Tim O'Connell." For Peter Carey knew good carriages when he saw them, and he saw them now. He had presided over the stable yard of Avonmere through several dynasties, and he had confided to the wife of his bosom this opinion:

"If I had the goold of the Queen an' the sinse of the Pope and the free run of all the cities in the wurld I couldn't a' done betther meself."

His respect for the General's horses and carriages was colossal, but the Fitzgeralds, with the exception of Sheila and Lawrence, he held in light esteem. He loudly repudiated all allegiance to the General since he had one day "got the better of him in argyment." The difference had been of a strictly family nature and as Peter explained to all the country side:

"The Ginral had no call at all, at all, to be putting in his words into it. He came down into the yard one morning smokin' one of his long quare cigars. An' says he wid a grin fit to crack his ugly face: 'How's Mrs. Carey and the child?'"

## ROSNAH

"They're grand entirely. Glory be to God," Carey had responded. "The little wan is terrible weeney, but we're glad enough to have her, weeney or big, after the long lot of boys we have."

"Yes, yes," said the General pompously, "and I have a very pleasant surprise for you. Lady Mary wishes to be god-mother to the baby. It seems that she has heard most satisfactory accounts of you and your good wife."

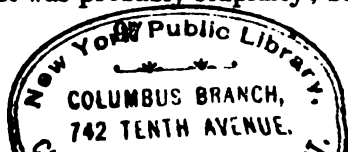
Instead of the beaming pleasure with which a Hindoo servant would have received this address, Carey darkly inquired the name of Lady Mary's informant and hinted at the physical alterations he would make in the face of any one "that took it into their heads to be makin' free with his character. They'd sup sorrow with a spoon of grief if he caught them laying their tongues on him or anyone belonging to him."

Somewhat nonplussed, but still benevolent, the General resumed:

"Lady Mary, being interested as I have said, will call upon Mrs. Carey to-day to see her little namesake. We shall, of course, expect you to call the child after Lady Mary."

"I'll call her after me mother," remarked Peter Carey.

The General stared. This was not at all what he had expected. It was probably stupidity; but it was



## ROSNAH

nevertheless unpleasant—deuced unpleasant—to be forcing an honor upon the boor.

“But my good man,” he now explained with a patience which would have amazed any of his former officers, “Lady Mary’s wishes are paramount here. If she is good enough to allow you to call the child after her, then after her it must be called.”

“I’ll call her after me mother,” said Peter Carey, whose conversational talentt was forceful rather than varied.

“You will not,” stormed the General. “And I’ll stand none of your insubordination. You’ll call her after Lady Mary.”

Peter Carey detached his ruminative gaze from the far horizon and focussed it upon the wheels of the dog cart which one of the grooms was washing in the sleepy sun-lit yard. He seemed in search, not of an idea, but of the words in which to phrase it. Presently he found them. He inserted his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, planted his feet more firmly upon the inclined approach to the holy of holies of his domain, and spoke.

“I’ll call her after me mother,” said Peter Carey. “I’ll call your horses what *you* please and I’ll take the liberty to call me children what *I* please. I’ll call her after me mother.”

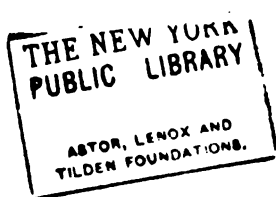
“Call her what you like,” snorted the General, who had too much vanity to dismiss Carey and to allow



"I'll call her after me mother,"

Peter Carey





## ROSNAH

his neighbors to hear of this ridiculous reason of his action. "Call her any confounded name you please. What was your mother's name?"

"Me mother's name was Mary," said Peter Carey with his unfathomable gaze once more fixed upon the distant mountains. Had the General been provided with a walking stick he would have struck that ruminative face. But Peter was too clever to allow one feature of it to show forth the intense enjoyment which was bubbling within his roomy bosom as he went on:

"It will be an aisy name for the crathur to write if ever she come to be that size at all. I can't make an offer at anything but a big black cross for me mark. But me mother had schoolin' wid the quality she was wid an' she could write her name finely. God rest her soul! Many's the time I seen it in the front of the ould prayer book at home. 'Spell it, ma'am,' we'd say to her. Spell Mary Carey. An' she would. 'Mary Carey,' she'd say, 'M-y-ary: Mary, C-y-ary: Carey. Mary Carey.' She was a great scholared me poor mother was."

When Peter had finished his soliloquy his audience was fuming toward the house. And Peter went upstairs to tell his disconcerted wife and his admiring neighbors of how he had "down faced the Ginerall in argyment."

All this had occurred during the General's first

## ROSNAH

week at Avonmere, but the pride and joy of it had upheld Carey ever since. He closed the door of the brougham now, at Tim McConnell's twentieth summons, and stooped to examine its handle. He spoke no word, but every wrinkle in his large red face called upon Heaven to witness that he doubted the silver plating and entirely disbelieved the neatly emblazoned crest. Still elaborately skeptical and disparaging he turned to Tim O'Connell.

"Peter Carey," cried that hot faced mercury, "you're to bring round the b'roosh this instant minute."

"The b'roosh. How are ye?" said Peter, managing to pack into the last three seemingly irrelevant words a wealth of scorn, defiance and anger.

"Thim's the Ginerals orders: The b'roosh at ten o'clock. 'Tis past it now," retorted Tim O'Connell, who would long ago have given up his position with its irksome confinement and its puzzling formalities if it were not for the vicarious authority it entailed. He would endure agonies of collar and shoe—both of which articles of dress he abhorred—he would carry tea cups and cake until his anxiety for their safe delivery stood in large drops upon his brow; he would submit to the scorn and jibes of his friends who worked in garden, yard or field; and all because as footman he could deliver orders to those two auto-

## ROSNAH

crats of the countryside, Mrs. Lynch, the cook, and Peter Carey, the coachman.

"You're to bring the b'roosh round to the door," he stolidly repeated. "An' you're to drive yourself," he added ambiguously. "Them's the orders. You can take thim or lave thim."

"You can go an' tell him I won't," was Peter's answer. "You can go an' tell him I'm not here to be dragged out of me warm bed at this time of the day to be gallivantin' off wid myself in b'rooshes."

Tim was not unprepared for some such rebellious utterance. He walked backwards a few paces into the sun-lit yard and accosted the neat row of windows over the coach house door.

"Mrs. Carey, ma'am," he called, and a replica of Peter in all save whiskers presented itself—with the suddenness of a Jack in the box—over the red geraniums and fuschias of the centre window.

"An' what's botherin' you, Tim avick?" asked Mrs. Carey.

"It's Peter, ma'am. I'm after givin' him orders and he's goin' on fit to be tied here below in the coach house, ma'am. 'Tis wantin' me to be goin' of scandeelious messages, he is."

"An' what call has the likes of you to be puttin' yourself and your orders where ye're not wanted," cried Peter's loyal consort.

"Sure no call at all, ma'am," he responded pacifi-

## ROSNAH

cally. Taking a rise out of Peter was all very well, but it might be carried too far. "Will you step down and spake to him, ma'am. Lady Mary and the Ginerall is up beyont on the terrace ready to go off with themselves for a drive, and here's Peter sayin' he'll not take them. So for the love of Heaven come down and spake to him. The Ginerall'll have me et if anything goes contrairy like."

Mrs. Carey's head vanished from among the geraniums and was presently seen looming in the back regions of the coach house. It surmounted a body surprisingly like that of her lord. The likeness was heightened by the fact that she was in livery. A red flannel petticoat served as the basis of her costume, but with it she wore a coat of the livery of General Fitzgerald's immediate predecessor and boots of a yet earlier period. Her wardrobe boasted an assortment of such liveries marking the families which had lived at Avonmere during Peter's tenure of office. And in such parts of them as were of no service to her she encased the junior Careys.

"Tim O'Connell," she now warned that anxious young man, "it'll be your best plan to be leggin' it away out o' this. What sort of ugly blatherin' have ye about yourself and your b'rooshes?"

The injustice of this attack reduced Tim to tears of rage and floods of vituperation. Through the

## ROSNAH

uproar Peter was heard solemnly demanding of the encircling carriages:

"As I a stick or a stone, which?" and haughtily informing the barouche—innocent cause of all this commotion:

"Sorra a fut will I go. Now that's all. I'm not here to be brought out of me warm bed at this time o' the night."

"Thin glory be, but it's kilt we'll be, the whole of us," moaned Tim. "For it's outrageous and outlandish entirely the Ginerall is this day."

"I'd see ye kilt with all the pleasure in life if it wasn't for that dacint woman, your poor mother," Mrs. Carey unfeelingly remarked. "But the crathur'd maybe be annoyed if ye was to get what ye well deserve. And that's no less than slaughter. So, Peter, maybe ye might as well be humorin' the Ginerall. Let the little man have his b'roosh if he wants it."

"I will not," Peter maintained. "An' is it drive meself bedad? It's meself I'd be apt to be driving. Howsomever I'm not goin'. An' if Tim O'Connell is afraid to tell him, then I'll tell him meself, bedad."

At this fierce threat Mrs. Carey changed color and her hand flew to that portion of her livery under which her heart was, as she described it, "leppin in her chest wid the start it give her."

"Now, Peter, avick," she besought him, "is it kilt

## ROSNAH

on us all ye wants to be?" But Peter's brow showed no sign of clearing; it grew in fact even darker as he locked the door leading to the stalls and put the key in his pocket.

"I'll not go," said Peter Carey.

"It's as good as killin' us he is, ma'am," whimpered Tim. "'Tis massacred he'll have us all this day."

At this prediction Mrs. Carey dashed up to her own apartments screeching to the junior Careys that they were to "come down out o' that an' see how their father was ruining them all wid his tantrums." The junior Careys needed no second bidding. They fell in howling torrents down the stairs and engulfed their sulky parent. The "long lot of boys" in their modified liveries threw themselves upon him with shrill cries and sharp pinches while Mrs. Carey loomed large in the background with M-y-ary in her arms and in purple faced hysterics.

"Don't, don't, daddy," cried Michael Dwyer Carey—"don't be ruinatin' of us with tantrums—"

"Lave go," said Peter grimly. "Stop slootherin' and callootherin' me. For divil a fut will I go."

"Do, do, daddy," yelled Robert Emmet Carey, catching the cue from his mother.

"I will not," said Peter morosely, rising like Gulliver from the toils of the Lilliputians and shedding junior Careys as he moved.



"Lave go," said Peter, grimly. "Stop slootherin' and callootherin' me."

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## ROSNAH

"How can I?" he demanded hotly, "when the Plunketts wint last night?"

"Wint!" echoed his wife. "Glory be! And then with a quick glance at the locked door: "And what horses had they?"

"The best in the county. Was the horses ever bred that's too good for Herself?"

"But the General!" gasped Tim. "Up there on the steps with Lady Mary waitin' for the b'roosh."

"You're to go an' tell them I'm not goin'," said Peter. "Tell thim I'm not a stick nor a stone to be dragged out of me warm bed at this time of the day. Tell thim anythin' you like, but I'll break every bone in your body if you tell thim the truth. Go on now," he concluded, taking a long lashed four-in-hand whip from its hook and unfurling it grimly. "Be off wid you."

"Listen to me, Tim avick," added Mrs. Carey, shutting M-y-ary into the brougham and following Tim out into the yard: "For God's sake, don't tell that Turk that Peter lent the horses—"

"Thin what'll I tell him?" demanded that badgered youth. "For the love of Heaven, ma'am, what'll I tell him?"

"Tell him nothin' at all. Go down to her little Ladyship an' ask her to spake for us. She'd never see the whole of us turned out. She has a likin' for the childer and for Peter too. Oh! Tim avick, leg

## ROSNAH

it away down to her little Grace. She was the savin' of us all before whin Peter took a drop and drove Mr. Pearson's best pair into the hin house consaitin' it was the stable. It like to take the manes off the craytures."

## XVI

**T**IM "legged it" to such purpose that in an incredibly short time his figure, ill adapted to cross country work, was "leppin" the flower beds in the garden of the Dower House. Miss Lytton looked up from her *Graphic* to remark:

"Ducky, dear, don't be alarmed, but a kangaroo is coming—in a hurry."

"Poor Tim," sighed the Duchess, recognizing her *protege*. "He is always getting into trouble. I'll go out and talk to him. The very sight of you would upset him. You and Sheila Fitzgerald seem to strike him dumb."

"Then go, by all means," her sister urged. "His equilibrium is already sufficiently unsteady." And as the Duchess opened a window and passed into the garden with a kind: "Well, Tim, you're in trouble? What can I do?" Adelaide wondered for the hundredth time at the sympathy and enthusiasm which her sister brought to bear upon the affairs of the

## ROSNAH

neighborhood. The rise and fall of Tim's recital came unintelligibly through the window and presently the sweet voice of the Duchess saying:

"It is very wrong of all of you. And after I recommended you so highly to the General! However, I must try to explain. Go and find Jerry. Tell him that I want the pony carriage at once."

And then the Duchess returned to her sister, her pretty face half amused, half anxious.

"Adelaide," quoth she, "if you will get your hat we will drive up and call upon the Fitzgeralds."

"Again! What is it, Ducky, the roof? Or chimney? Or floor?"

"None of these," responded the Duchess; "but a worse and more difficult thing. The Plunketts left their place last night and Peter Carey lent the General's four carriage horses for the expedition. There is nothing in the stables except saddle horses and Lady Mary's ponies, and the General has ordered the landau. Really, it is too bad of Peter. He made *such* protestations when he wanted me to recommend him. Would you like to support me when I explain this situation to 'Cross Fitzgerald'?"

"I should love it, I should love it," cried Adelaide. "I don't see why anyone need be afraid of him. He's a great deal more fun in a rage than out of one. Did you ever notice that he begins to be violent in English and then changes to Hindustani? I wish,"

## ROSNAH

she sighed, "that I understood Hindustani. Lady Mary always looks so interested."

As the ponies trotted around the last bend of the avenue the heart of the Duchess sank. The General, Lady Mary, Desmond and Rosnah were uneasily grouped upon the wide terrace. Tim O'Connell, having outdistanced the relief expedition by some miraculous means, rushed forth and threw himself upon the ponies' necks. Lady Mary and Rosnah welcomed the heaven-sent interruption to the General's tirade, but when the party had been readjusted and augmented he resumed his fuming, though in a new key.

"If one had any control of one's servants in this ridiculous country I should ask you and Miss Lytton to drive into Dublin with us this morning. I ordered the carriage five hours ago."

"My dear General," remonstrated Lady Mary.

"Well, an hour ago then. Of what use are those horses to us? I am firmly convinced that that coachman—a surly brute—spends his days in drunken stupor. I spoke kindly to him once and his manner was most extraordinary."

"He is difficult to understand just at first," the Duchess admitted. "But he was excellently trained by Mr. Plunkett, of Mount Eagle. I wonder if you have met the Plunketts?" And cheered by the approbation in Adelaide's eyes she added:

"They are our greatest celebrities—"

## ROSTONAH

"Tell us all about them," said the comfortable Lady Mary. "We shall be sure to meet them. And we must rely upon you to supply us with the gossip of the neighborhood." Clever Lady Mary! The General loved gossip.

"I might," the Duchess responded with a challenging eye upon Adelaide, "but I fear you will be shocked."

"Don't think it for a moment," urged the gallant General, all alert at this suggestion, "I am sure we shall be most interested."

"Yes, dear," Adelaide put in, "they are *sure* to be interested."

Thus urged, the Duchess began to prepare the minds of her hearers for the disclosure she had come to make. Her manner as she told the story of the Plunketts was perfect. Her low pitched voice, her eloquent gestures, her quick tears and her thrilling laugh added a hundred fold to the already whimsical and pathetic story.

Twenty years ago the richest, the gayest, the happiest household in all that countryside was Mount Eagle, the home of the Plunketts. One son and two daughters, innumerable cousins and aunts, an occasional uncle, and a permanent grandmother formed the nucleus of the family. To these were added friends, visitors, retainers, sycophants, travelling gentry and servants galore. In the stables there

## ROSNAH

were horses for driving, racing and hunting; enough to provide transportation and amusement for as many guests as the dozen or more guest rooms could accommodate. In the greenhouses every country under the sun was represented. In the poultry houses and flying cages every bird which could live in the soft moist climate was to be found. The son was Master of the Hounds. Hunt breakfasts, hunt balls, dinners, garden parties, dances, archery contests, tenantry picnics: every known or inventable form of gaiety kept the servants in a whirl of activity and excitement and made Mount Eagle the gathering point for any one on pleasure bent for miles and miles around.

And not only those in search of pleasure were welcome there. In sickness, sorrow and disgrace the peasant's first thought and surest help was "Herself up above at Mount Eagle." There were tales of her having risen from her table when "all sorts of quality was in it" to assist Father Dan in the cheering of some poor soul's last moments in this hard and dreary world. And many a pair of closing eyes were prepared to look undismayed at the angels in heaven because their last vision on earth was "Herself" in her glory of satin and jewels with the light of love in her face.

"I remember her," said the Duchess, "as the loveliest creature I ever saw. Once when I was very ill

## ROSNAH

here at Avonmere she came to me. I had never seen her. We had been here but a short time, I was lying half asleep and wholly miserable in the middle of an enormous bed in the middle of an enormous room, and thinking how desirable and convenient it would be to die. I heard someone coming, but I was so deadly tired of everyone about me that I didn't open my eyes until a voice said:

"You don't mean to tell me, George, that you call that baby a Duchess? And later," she paused for a moment, "when other trouble came to me she was good, so good, and so wise."

Lady Mary took her landlord's hand and patted it.

"I'm an admirer of Mrs. Plunkett's from this hour, my dear," said she, "I hope we shall be great friends—"

"You'll love her," Adelaide interrupted, "and Mount Eagle is still the most charming place."

"And then," resumed the Duchess, "suddenly, without the slightest sign or warning, everything went. First the son, killed in the hunting field and brought home on an improvised litter of green branches. I remember that day and that night. I had never heard the Irish 'Keening' before. It was terrible."

She shuddered.

"Then the money went; suddenly and without reason, as happiness had gone, and after that every-



## ROSNAH

thing was very quiet at Mount Eagle. 'Herself' has never recovered from the loss of her boy, but before a year had passed she laid hold upon life again for others. And through all the years since then she has sustained and cheered the spirit of her husband and her daughters, and is still the Lady Bountiful of the village.

"But upon what?" asked Desmond. "You say they lost everything."

"Absolutely everything. But if you are so fortunate as to be asked there to dine, you will never guess it. They are as bright and well served as it is possible to be. And now comes the funny part," she laughed. "Now prepare to be shocked, most learned Queen's Council, when you hear how we, in Ireland, treat the majesty of law. As your keen mind has already grasped, there are difficulties in getting on comfortably on nothing at all a year. The solving of these difficulties has been Mr. Plunkett's constant diversion and as he has always shared everything with his neighbors, we take part in this diversion too. He gave a dinner once at which all the men had revolvers at their plates—because that morning the bailiffs had come to take possession and Mr. Plunkett had coerced them into livery—*his* livery—but was not sure of their waiting properly at table; hence the revolvers. It was a delightful dinner," sighed the Duchess. "Mr. Plunkett is a very

## ROSNAH

handsome old man and once we all thought he would shoot the bailiff, who was serving the artichokes, and whom he suspected of appraising the silver dish."

"Very proper of him, too," boomed the General. "I shall endeavor to make that Mr. Plunkett's acquaintance."

"You wanted him to kill a man for your amusement!" marvelled Adelaide.

"Not a man, dear, a bailiff," the Duchess corrected, and the General, with a glance at Desmond, chuckled delightedly.

"Oh! you are incorrigible," cried her sister. "You're turning into a savage and I intend to tell Father to send for you and keep you in Grosvenor Square until you grow civilized again."

"You may do as you like," the Duchess defied her with a mutinous tilt of her head. "I shall go on with the story. Unless I bore anyone. You know we are very enthusiastic about the Plunketts."

"No, no," they all protested, and Lady Mary added: "If you said nothing at all, my dear, it would be a pleasure only to look at you."

"Well, and so times grew harder," the Duchess continued, "and bailiffs more frequent until they began to bore Mr. Plunkett. It was very unpleasant for Mrs. Plunkett and the girls to have these common men sitting in the hall, and, of course, the servants wouldn't tolerate them in the kitchen."

## ROSNAH

"Servants?" queried Desmond. "How do they manage to pay servants when their affairs are in such a deplorable condition?"

"They don't. How should they? But only a very inferior sort of Irish servant would leave on that account. And where would they go to? Where could they be more comfortable or more kindly treated than they are at Mount Eagle? It is the ambition of every boy and girl in the village to be "taken on by Herself." The people who leased Avonmere last year could hardly get workmen enough to keep the grounds in order, while over at Mount Eagle, Mrs. Plunkett told me, they had more than they really wanted or could afford to feed."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Desmond.

"But go on about the bailiffs," Adelaide commanded. "I'm ever so interested in them."

"They're at Mount Eagle now, if you would care to call," said the Duchess mischievously. "But the Plunketts are staying with the Frosts over in Wexford. They will go about from place to place until the bailiffs have gone away. And all their friends will be overjoyed to have them. For there never was, since the world began," the Duchess insisted with a fine enthusiasm, "a visitor like 'Herself,' and I assure you that very few things can give one of us more pleasure than to see their dear old coach turning in at our gates. By the way, they always travel

## ROSTON

in their coach, which, as it is not legally theirs, cannot be attached by the creditors. It was given to their gardener, in lieu of wages, by the people he lived with before going to them."

"It must be some time," commented Desmond, "since that gardener has been flush with ready money."

"It must, indeed," the Duchess acquiesced laughingly. "And, by the way, he will be staying here with Jerry, my man, for the next few weeks. The servants go to visit their friends while their 'quality' is away."

"And the bailiffs?" queried Adelaide again.

"Are boycotted, of course. They leave the sooner on that account."

"It is all very delightful," said Desmond, "but I fear it may end badly one of these days. Suppose that, in the absence of 'Herself' and the family, the creditors should sell the contents of Mount Eagle at auction?"

"To whom?" queried the Duchess blandly. "They tried it once. But the expensive auctioneer from Dublin spent a few quiet hours with the bailiffs and went home again. None of us went, of course. Who would buy the table about which we had so often gathered? Who would buy the chair from which 'Herself' had dispensed pleasure, comfort and help to all of us? A few outsiders were attracted by the

## ROSNAH

advertisements, but they got no further than the gates. They were met there by peasants and blunderbusses, and they changed their minds. And, after all, it was of great benefit to the Plunketts. Everything was mended and polished and patched for the auction. We hardly knew the place when we went up for the next housewarming."

"And the horses for these expeditions?" queried Desmond of the legal mind. "Are they furnished by invisible agency?"

Before the Duchess could bring herself to perform her mission to which she had so skillfully led up by her story, an upper window was thrown open and the voice of Katy-parlor-maid rent the air.

"Mrs. Dwyer, ma'am," she shrilled, "I was afraid you'd get away before I'd see you. I'm up here doin' Miss Sheila's room. Is there any news below in the village?"

"The worst of bad news for the poor in the place," a cracked voice answered. The owner of it was invisible to and oblivious of the "quality" gathered within earshot. "The Plunketts is gone again."

"Och, Glory be to God! The saints be good to thim," said Katy-parlor-maid, while Adelaide and the Duchess, scenting danger, tried to monopolize the General's attention. But at the name of Plunkett, a courteous interest had animated the Fitzgeralds;

## ROSTNAH

they listened, alert and smiling, while the question dropped from the clouds:

"An' had 'Herself' all she wanted?"

"The best of everything," responded the gossip. "I was up to bid them Godspeed and give 'Herself' an egg or two I was saving up this great while back, thinking I'd maybe get enough for a clutch. An' there was Peter Carey, gran' he looked entirely puttin' the General's chestnut four to the coach an' warnin' the young boy what was drivin' to have them back in time to take her Ladyship and the General out to-day. The boy wan't back with them ten minutes ago whin I was down in the yard an' the little man takin' it into his head to go for a drive wid himself. He has Peter annoyed."

"The little man," also, seemed to be annoyed. He stamped and swore in discreet Hindustani. His face was purple, even his ears were twitching, and the Duchess was wishing herself well away from her tenant when there trotted up from the stable a radiant vision. A resplendent carriage drawn by a pair of gleaming chestnut horses, high headed, high stepping, so fresh and restless as to require all the attention of the magnificent coachman on the box. The General sprang to meet them and Peter Carey turned upon him a smile of such devotion and good will as made him change his contemplated tirade to an amazed:

## ROSNAH

"What horses are these?"

"Romulus and Raymus, the leaders, your honor. An' I've had the work of the world catchin' them out in the paddock. 'Tis too little to do they have, be-dad. Was her Ladyship waitin' long?"

"And now that your carriage is here," urged her Grace of Clontarf, "you must not let us detain you. But if you take my advice, General Fitzgerald, you will not allow that foolish old Mollie Malone, whose voice I think I heard indistinctly a moment ago, to be talking to your servants. For she is," she explained in a confidential undertone, "quite mad, poor creature."

But the Fitzgeralds would not hear of abandoning their charming guests. Rather they would give up their drive. It was already, Lady Mary urged, nearly luncheon time; the other boys would soon be in; would not the Duchess and Miss Lytton waive ceremony?

The Duchess and Miss Lytton allowed themselves to be persuaded and the General almost apologetically turned to order Peter Carey back to the stables. That revolutionist accepted the command with a submission which might have surprised those not privileged to hear him remark to the wife of his bosom:

"'Tis as well, maybe, we didn't go far. The cratures will be the better for a little sleep. I told that

## ROSNAH

fool of a boy to go easy with the bottle, but what does the likes of him know about doctorin'? He near emptied the whole of it down Raymus's throat and he's feelin' the age of M-y-ary."

"What was it, avick?" she asked with spellbound admiration.

"'Twas a mix-um gather-um, me dear," he answered. "But it was all accordin' to ould Dr. Keegan's conscriptions. They was a sup o' the green bottle he left for Michael Dwyer's croup an' a sup o' the brown one he give me for the could I had this great while back on me shest, and some of the wash he left for Robert Emmet's bad finger. But the best we had was the bottle of whisky Tim O'Connell priggged from the sideboard. O whisky, you're me darlin'!" cried Mr. Carey, who may have partaken of one ingredient of his own prescription, throwing an arm like a bolster round the shoulders of Mrs. Carey's livery. "O whisky, you're me darlin'! It's a pity you ever done any harm."

## XVII

**Q**UANY and varied were the trials of the General's favorite child. The days grew to weeks and Rosnah's confession was still unmade. She spent hours in a state of indecision far outrivalling



## ROSNAH

that of Launcelot Gobbo, and it was only by very exacting effort that she maintained her pretty ease of manner. Each day brought its own embarrassments, its own dangers of discovery, its own escapes, its own letter hour,—two letter hours to be exact. And General Fitzgerald had managed to make the arrival of letters a curse to whoever received them. He was fond of little functions, and, twice a day, after breakfast and just before dinner, it was his happy fancy to assemble his children about him; to open the post-bag with his own nervous hands, and to examine every envelope it contained with a horrible and inquisitive sharpness. Nothing was allowed to escape unscrutinized, and it was his genial habit to enliven the officialdom of his own news and the impersonality of his *London Times* by calling upon his children to read aloud any letter whose appearance or postmark seemed to promise entertainment. This form of amusement and the impromptu “editing” it entailed were popular with none of his children. It was Rosnah, however, who suffered most on these occasions and in whose correspondence he evinced the most fiendish interest. He had developed a great admiration and affection for his sister-in-law, Patricia, since he had seen the fair flower of her training, and he always insisted upon news of her. And Rosnah, as she hurriedly invented small gossip and polite messages, often wondered—though she never

## ROSNAH

tried the experiment—what would result if she were to read aloud some such letter as:

“Rosnah Darling: I know you will think me the worst of cowards, but you simply must go on being me for another few days. I know it is shabby of me. I know I am a shocking coward, but I cannot bring myself to face those relatives of mine of whom you seem so fond. I wish with all my heart that you could have them altogether. You remember that I wished it when the General’s letter came. Well, now, I wish it more than ever. I can’t bring myself to leave Kevin and be an inconsiderate item in a large family of practical strangers. But truly, dear, and really, I will come home very soon now, and, of course, if they discover the truth I shall come at once and face the crisis with you.

“Your own devoted,

“Sheila Fitzgerald.”

She often wondered, too, at the sense of resignation with which she saw herself committed to an indefinite period of masquerade. Indefinite, for she was beginning very clearly to gauge the disposition of the real Sheila and to see that that unnatural daughter had no intention of quitting Glencora and Kevin until the substitute confessed or was discovered. And surely the time was ripe for confession; the first strangeness of meeting was well worn off;

## ROSNAH

the General was most favorably disposed and Lady Mary's forgiveness was a matter of course; the boys would be amused. And yet she hesitated. She was not, she assured herself, afraid of the General. The outbreaks of peppery temper before which Lady Mary quailed were only diverting to her. And yet again she hesitated, for she had found at Avonmere a task exactly to her mind—that of being a sister to an austere and high principled Queen's Council. It was manifestly wrong that a man of so much charm, intellect and ability should be allowed to hover on the border of misogyny. Desmond's state, when he arrived at Avonmere, was very little short of that. It was her duty to her sex—or so she told herself—to let this supercilious barrister see that a woman might be his intellectual equal and a better friend than a stuffy old librarian or a Circuit Judge.

Thus far she had met with unqualified success. It were a pity to leave with this duty still undone and to let Mr. Lovell imagine that his thunder-cloud surveillance, his tornado-like remonstrances, his constant though seeming natural watchfulness could drive a Creighton from the field.

But there was in reality little heart in John Lovell's threats; he, being so constant a looker-on, had seen a good deal of the game and right wisely he feared that to disclose Rosnah's identity and to drive her back to Glencora would be to deprive himself

## ROSNAH

very promptly of the society of his friend, Desmond Fitzgerald. And though his friendship for that gentleman rather languished, and though he derived but little pleasure from the comradeship which existed between Rosnah and Desmond, he knew that he could better bear to see them walking or riding or driving together about Step-Aside, reading together in the noble old library of Avonmere, or strolling up and down upon the terrace, than to imagine them engaged in the same pursuits at far off Kilgoggan and Glencora.

## XVIII

**A**PON the occasion of one of those loiterings in the library to which Lovell so much objected, Desmond subjected Rosnah to another of the shocks which were rapidly undermining her nervous system. It was a sad, wet afternoon and Rosnah, reading by the window, thought she was quite alone until she felt a quiet hand upon her hair and looked up into the face of her eldest brother.

“Why so pensive, little sister?” asked Desmond. His education had advanced so far that he habitually addressed her thus—“is life too quiet for you here?”

This was so glaringly at variance with the truth that Rosnah was able to repudiate the suggestion with a proper show of sincerity.

## ROSNAH

"But really," she reiterated, in answer to his smile of incredulity, "I find life here most interesting and most exciting."

"Exciting," Desmond repeated, laughingly, "it is the very extreme of the humdrum, and I have arranged that you shall have a little holiday from it."

"You are kind, but mistaken," she maintained. "I am not in the least bored, and I love being at Avonmere."

"Aye, but you'll love London better," he insisted, "for that is to be the scene of your holiday. Everything is arranged and you have nothing to do but to pack a gown or two. The Lady Mother has consented to entrust you to me. Even the Governor, though he stormed and fussed at first, sees now that it is his duty to let you go. I am obliged to run up to town for about a week and you are to come with me. A great crony of mine, old Lady Mary Fortescue, will take you under her wing at parties and that sort of thing, and for the rest you will be the sacred charge of your loving brother."

"Oh! but I couldn't," cried she. "I really couldn't, Desmond. It wouldn't do at all."

"It will do capitally," he assured her, in the large and offhand manner with which he most loved to treat his "Little Sister." "It is all arranged and planned for your pleasure, and you have nothing to do but to enjoy yourself and be kind and fond of

## ROSNAH

your poor old brother. My house," he went on, "will be dull and dingy for so bright a guest, but we will soon arrange that. We will have the upholsterer in and he shall do it over from top to bottom according to your instructions, for I expect you to spend a great deal of your time in Hyde Park Crescent with me."

Rosnah laughed and blushed, thanked Desmond very prettily, declined the invitation very positively, and tried to change the subject. Brought quietly back to it she declared that however lightly Lady Mary and the General might hold her society, she was too fond of them to think of going away even for a week, but Desmond quietly pointed out that she had managed to get on without them for a reassuring number of years, and that they were ready to endure a short separation now. In vain she pleaded fear of trains, of seasickness, and a lack of suitable apparel. Each of these excuses he parried and made light of. Then she developed a surprising sense of duty toward her other brothers and asked, on the verge of tears, why she should be expected to desert them. When he brazenly laughed at this and dared her to say that either Lawrence or Gerald was essential to her daily happiness, she was forced to admit that they were not, and to bestow all her affection upon Owen. She must, she insisted, stay at home to take care of him. She was very uneasy

## ROSNAH

about him. Had Desmond noticed how ill he seemed and how unhappy? It appeared that Desmond had. Even if his own observation had not been sufficient there had been an interview with Ameera, in which the native woman, in scraps of English and of Hindustani, eked out with a marvellous power of sign and gesture, had told him that her Owen *baba* was keeping dreadful hours, and that even when he did sleep he was restless, hot and liable to start into alarmed and suspicious wakefulness at the slightest sound or movement.

Rosnah could add further evidence that there was something wrong with the boy; he had grown moody and taciturn and intensely nervous. She, too, had known that he was often afield at night. He seemed more at ease with her than with any of his brothers, and surely she could not, she pleaded, go away and leave him to the care of the servants, although they, one and all, were devoted to him. Neither could she warn Lady Mary, who had apparently failed to notice that anything was wrong with her "baby."

And Desmond, much against his will, was forced to acquiesce in this decision for the time.

"But you will," he insisted, "come to London with me later on, you promise?"

"I will, indeed, I will, but only after you have come to Glencora with me. I am ever so sorry not to be

## ROSNAH

able to go with you now, but really you know it wouldn't do."

"No," he acquiesced sadly, "I suppose it wouldn't. And yet it's a pity; the season is at its height."

"Now go on," she urged, "tell me just what it's like, this height of the London season. Is it very gay this year?"

"I think it is very much the usual thing. The usual number of balls and dinners and new plays. More than the usual number of debutantes and twice the usual number of royal foreigners *incognito*. I hate that custom intensely. If the people are not known, then there is a nasty air of deceit about the thing. If they are known, and most commonly they are, then it is merely stupid. And why men and women of any station or of any title should find amusement in concealing their individuality and abandoning their responsibilities, is a thing which I could never understand. Masquerade of any kind is most distasteful to me."

"But sometimes," Rosnah urged, "sometimes it is kind or necessary or advisable. You remember the King in the Arabian Nights and all the good he did for his people?"

"On an Arabian Night, perhaps," admitted this learned barrister at law. "But on British days, my dear Sheila, you will find that people keep to their own name and station, unless they want to do some-



## ROSNAH

thing unbecoming or unlawful. We see a great deal of that sort of thing in my profession, and we rarely find that the motive will bear examination. It is not commonly done for good."

"Or for fun?" Rosnah suggested, hopefully.

"Nor for fun," he answered. "Believe me, dear, the fun which requires that sort of deception is not very funny."

## XIX

**L**ADY MARY and her General drove into Dublin to lunch at the Vice-Regal Lodge one day and early in the afternoon a messenger arrived with a letter from the Lady Mother announcing to her "darling daughter" the fact that the General and she had encountered at the Vice-Regal table a Mr. and Mrs. Potter, companions of their early Indian days, and had decided to spend the night in town, dining at The Shelbourne with their new found friends and talking over old times and people.

"The Potters leave to-morrow," the mother wrote, "otherwise we should have persuaded them to come to Avonmere for a few days. I wanted them to see my precious children. But this must wait until another time. Pray send Cagney to The Shelbourne in the dog-cart with our things. He will pack for

## ROSNAH

your father and Ameera will send me everything I want. Dear child, it is such a comfort to feel that you are there to take care of the boys. I hope you will all have a very happy evening together without any old people to bother you."

Here was a predicament! Rosnah, in all her many anxieties, had never imagined that she could be left at Avonmere, bereft of a chaperon and with only four hours before dinner in which to evolve one. She sent for Cagney and for Ameera, gave them their instructions and then donned hat, hoisted parasol and set out across the park for the Dower House. Of course, thought she, the Duchess and Adelaide would be glad enough to dine and sleep at Avonmere. They often came up to dinner, and frequently, if the weather were unpropitious, they stayed all night. So she argued as she trailed her pretty dress over the lawns, and Desmond, watching her from his upper window, thought for the hundredth time how fair and dear and sweet she was, this sister of his, and congratulated himself, also for the hundredth time, upon the prospect of introducing her to his London friends.

But for once the little Duchess failed her friend.

"It would be delightful," she admitted ruefully, "but some terrible old fogies are coming here to dine, and Adelaide and I are fixtures."

"Oh! the most awful old frumps," Miss Lytton

## ROSNAH

broke in, "the most unspeakable frights. Ducky and I drove about in the pony carriage for one long morning and whenever the pony shied at a woman Ducky got out and invited her to dine with us to-night. She does it once every year when I am here with her. I implored her to have some of you down to lighten the gloom, but she says, and I think she's right, that none of our guests could enjoy themselves in the presence of your frocks. That is the third one within the week, isn't it? A beauty! I wish my father were a retired Indian General instead of a respectable manufacturer of jam."

"Sheila, dear," the Duchess broke in, "it is ever so kind of you to ask us, and we are broken-hearted. But frankly, now, don't you think you would be better by yourselves; that even such friendly outsiders as Adelaide and I would be a little in the way?"

"I see what you mean," Rosnah acquiesced demurely, "but since you want frankness, I can't agree with you."

It was nearly six o'clock when Rosnah passed again up the avenue of Avonmere. She was very tired. She had paid three nightmare visits to three ladies with whom she was on terms of the very slightest and most formal acquaintance. To each of them she had made, with a carefully casual air, the astounding request that they would come and spend the night with her at Avonmere. Each of the three

## ROSTNAH

ladies had declined. The doctor's wife because she had an unbreakable engagement. Little Mrs. Dimmick because Mr. Dimmick had promised that he and she would dine with a client of his. And the Curate's mother because—or so Rostnah fancied—she considered her visitor quite mad. And so Rostnah toiled up the avenue more close to tears of weariness and embarrassment than she had been for many a day.

Her dilemma was all horns. To invent a hasty summons away from Avonmere would be to bring upon herself, she knew, Desmond's careful guardianship. To stay was impossible. To confide in anyone was equally impossible. To run away secretly was out of the question. Yes, the only daughter of the Fitzgerald household had a queer trapped feeling as she reached the terrace and found her four brothers waiting with varying tales of the day's adventures to recount to her. Nothing occurred in the interval before dinner to relieve the tension. The dressing bell rang and Rostnah gave herself over into the hands of Ameera with very much the feeling which might have animated the ladies of the French court during the Reign of Terror when they dressed for Madame Guillotine. Then, when she had despaired of it, relief came. She heard the noise of an arrival, and looking out from her window she was reassured by seeing the Curate's mother disembarking from a prehistoric vehicle into the arms of the

## ROSNAH

astonished butler. Descending hastily she was in time to see astonishment, tempered with dismay, in the faces of Gerald and Owen, who were smoking near one of the windows. They had never met the Curate's mother, and, though their manners were good, they were not convincingly glad when that lack was remedied and they could not in the least understand Rosnah's apparently genuine pleasure nor the little staccato phrases in which the guest explained her presence and apologized for her earlier refusal. The truth, which she did not tell, was that after Rosnah's departure she had begun to bewail that refusal, and to regret having declined what was probably the only opportunity she would ever have of beginning future remarks with: "When I was stopping with the Fitzgeralds at Avonmere, my dear."

Hardly was the Curate's mother welcomed and established when the doctor's gig passed the window and the doctor's wife, voluble and red faced, broke into the drawing room. She was closely followed by Desmond, and some more enforced cordiality took place. It had hardly subsided when Mrs. Dimmick, dusty, but indomitable, was announced, and Rosnah had the pleasure of feeling that her brothers all shared the Curate's mother's opinion of her sanity. For each of the chaperons had made it ghastly plain that she had been invited and each seemed to take

## ROSNAH

special and personal umbrage at the presence of the other two.

The butler and his aides had thrice arranged and thrice disarranged the hospitable board. The atmosphere of the drawing room was strained to breaking point when Lawrence Fitzgerald interrupted the Curate's mother's opinion of last Sunday's sermon to announce that the Duchess of Clontarf and Miss Adelaide Lytton were coming across the lawn.

"And by the lord Harry!" exclaimed the artless Lawrence, "they're dressed as if they were coming to dine! Come over here, Sheila, and take a look at them."

Rosnah, too dazed for aught but obedience, crossed to his side and waved a languid hand at the latest arrivals. At Lawrence's announcement panic had seized Mrs. Dimmick and the doctor's wife, and it was upon a frozen silence that Adelaide Lytton's voice floated in through the window.

"Oh, Sheila dear," she cried, "by the most astounding luck the frumps remembered that they had had previous engagements for to-night. So Ducky and I came up to take care of you."

While the enraged butler and his utterly demoralized aides were arranging and disarranging the now most inhospitable board, Mrs. Dimmick and the doctor's wife made each six distinct and warring explanations to the Duchess. The unregenerate Miss

## ROSNAH

Lytton, whose felicitous remark seemed to hang crystallized in the air long after she had uttered it, retired with Lawrence behind the curtains and indulged in unseemly hysterics.

## XX

**D**URING the progress of the dinner so unpromptuously begun, Rosnah suffered all the pangs of the hostess unprepared, combined with those of a prisoner at the bar. The conversation wandered miserably among by-paths and deadly swamps without aim, without guide, and without life. The Duchess was slow to accept defeat. She and Gerald kept up a flow of badinage, while Adelaide flirted openly with Lawrence, and the Curate's mother as openly disapproved of them. Desmond, too, did all that a man might do, but since Mrs. Dimmick and the Curate's mother were not on speaking terms, and since he did not know it, his efforts met with but slight success, though they earned him the undying gratitude of Rosnah.

The period in the drawing room alone with the women after dinner seemed so long to Rosnah that she suspected her brothers of concerted desertion in time of trouble. But at last they appeared, and Rosnah was able to act upon the intelligence which

## ROSNAH

the butler had conveyed to her with the fish and amplified at each succeeding course. At first it had been a mere: "The housekeeper's compliments, Miss Sheila, and would you speak to her when convenient after dinner." But as dish followed dish the whispered warning grew ever more sinister. "She says where is she to put them all, Miss? They all come prepared to stop the night," garnished Rosnah's piece of turbot. Later it was: "She says that if one of them was a man or if two of them was married she could maybe give the other her room." And at last it had been: "She's after givin' warnin' to Katy-parlor-maid on the strength of passin' remarks about Her Grace and Miss Lytton aisy enough goin' home and not flusterin' people where to put them."

Rosnah had never felt so thoroughly in disgrace as she did when she at last sought the thunder presence of Mrs. O'Leary. Every member of the party in the drawing room was intensely uncomfortable and each, with perfect justice, held her responsible. Adelaide and Lawrence were enjoying themselves, but they were not in the drawing room. They were out on the twilight terrace watching the moon wheeling slowly up behind the trees, and the soft laughter which punctuated their discourse made the gloom within doors almost palpable.

With the pleasant informality of the Irish servant the butler appointed himself to the committee on



## ROSTNAH

sleeping arrangements and proposed the most extraordinary adaptations of apartment to guest. After much debate a plan was reached and the chastened Katy-parlor-maid and her colleagues were sent staggering about the upper regions under towering mattresses and pillows. The Duchess and Miss Lytton had long ago announced their intention to go back to the Dower House, but her compassionate Grace had promised to stay with Rostnah until the phalanx of chaperons should break and retire.

"After that you will be safe until the morning," she had pointed out. "But I do feel, my dear, that breakfast will be rather an ordeal. Will you tell me," she asked with her pretty smile, "why you played such a trick on us? To think one had escaped the frumps and to find them gathered here! Why?"

"I can't explain," cried Rostnah, miserably. "But you must believe that I never meant to do it. You do believe it? You must!"

"But you asked them," insisted the puzzled Duchess. "All your brothers tell me that you admit having asked them."

"Oh! I asked them," the girl answered, "but I cannot tell you why."

When she was sure that things were going as well as might be among the bedrooms, she approached the scene of revelry again and encountered upon the

## ROSNAH

hall table a very forest of bedroom candlesticks which, for some seconds, gave her pause. But she gathered courage; went forward to her duty; and discussed blankets with the Curate's mother more intelligently than she could have done an hour earlier.

Gerald was playing some bright French chansons at the piano, and the Duchess was listening to Mrs. Dimmick's fifteenth explanation of her presence in the Avonmere drawing room when she should have been at the Dower House. Desmond and the doctor's wife were playing chess, and Owen was wandering about, like an uneasy but courteous spirit, from group to group. Everyone was visibly longing for bedtime and yet Mrs. O'Leary would require at least a half hour's grace. Lawrence and Adelaide were still upon the terrace, and the Curate's mother, through the folds of her blankets, was still disapproving of them.

Then Lawrence, for the second time that evening, constituted himself herald.

"There's a carriage coming up the drive," he announced.

"Don't let them in," cried Rosnah wildly. "O, Lawrence, don't let them in." And as the groups broke up she turned desperately to Desmond: "I didn't ask them, whoever they are. Indeed and indeed I didn't."

But there was no portcullis at Avonmere and

## ROSNAH

sounds of cordiality were already to be heard upon the terrace. Then the hall door opened, the butler's voice rose in surprised welcome among the candlesticks, and Lady Mary and the General were in the room.

### XXI

**T**HE General and his wife were so amazed to see their guests, and so busy concealing their amazement, that an appreciable season of calm was granted to Rosnah before the General broke out:

"Upon my word, my dear Mary, we are forgetting the Potters."

"They are quite well, I hope," began Rosnah at wide random. "Mother wrote that you were to spend the night with them. We did not expect—"

"Oh! they are all right," said the General. "In fact they're here."

"Here?" echoed Rosnah. Here?"

"On the terrace with the children," purred Lady Mary delightedly. "The night was so perfect that we persuaded them to drive out with us. We have promised that they shall have breakfast at cock-crow and be at the Kingstown Pier as early as if they had spent the night in town."

## ROSNAH

"And where *will* they spend it?" Rosnah heard herself asking as she looked at her corps of chaperons and thought of Mrs. O'Leary. "Where will they spend it, dear Lady Mother?"

"I shall arrange all that with O'Leary presently," said the innocent Lady Mary. "But now I want you and the boys to be nice to Mrs. Potter. She is very much interested in all of you. She remembers some of you as babies in India. They have no children of their own and live alone in a great, many-chambered house in Walbeck Street."

"London?" asked Rosnah inaudibly. "Walbeck Street, London?"

"To be sure," her mother answered. "It will be nice for you to know them when you go to London with Desmond."

And so it was at the end of a long and alarm-filled day that discovery came to Avonmere. It was all over now. All the pleasant, friendly days, all the loving companionship with Lady Mary which had been so precious to the motherless counterfeit. All the jolly friendships with the four brothers. On the morrow the real Sheila would be sent for and Lady Rosnah would go back to Glencora and to the excitements of inspecting puppies and planning flower-beds. For Mrs. Potter was an old friend of the Earl of Creighton's and his daughter had spent many a

## ROSNAH

happy week in the many-chambered house in Walbeck Street.

Mr. and Mrs. Potter were soon renewing old memories with the boys and Lady Mary was assisting in a transport of pride while Rosnah clung to her chaperons, who had tactfully retreated to the card table, and wondered how much grace would be granted her. None apparently. General Fitzgerald's touch was on her arm. He took her hand with an air of perfect satisfaction in her beauty and her noble bearing and led her up to his friends.

"This," said he, with an emotion which surprised the Potters, "is my daughter."

Lady Mary was beaming, the General was swelling visibly with fatherly affection, the brothers were frankly delighted and admiring. Desmond was more than ever determined now that the girl should be presented to his London friends, for she disclosed an entirely new charm as she stood beside her father, timid, blushing, with eyes fastened upon the carpet and hands nervously clasping and unclasping among the laces of her dress.

Mrs. Potter stared and her husband gouged an eyeglass into his short-sighted eye. Slowly Rosnah raised her beautiful eyes and wistfully she smiled at the woman who had been her hostess not three months before. Surprises were the order of that day at Avonmere and the Potters were not to be neglected

## ROSTNAH

in that regard. Mrs. Potter looked into the sweet eyes fixed upon her, looked at the surrounding Fitzgeralds so proudly serene, looked at her own amazed husband and spoke.

"You were not born, my dear," she said, "when I left India, and yet I feel as though I had known you, too, before this evening. Will you humor an old woman's whim and come for a chat with me when we go upstairs?"

"You are very kind," breathed Lady Rostnah. "Oh, very, very kind."

"God bless my soul!" cried the husband suddenly, when he had focused his eyeglass to his satisfaction. "God bless my soul!" he repeated, as his wife's foot touched his warningly. "And burn my body!" he amplified as he regarded the fatuous smile of his friend Fitzgerald, and listened to the General's words.

"Not in the least like those boys of Lady Mary's you see. She is, as I told you in the carriage, the living image of my poor, dear, mother."

## XXII

**I**T WAS almost luncheon time on the next day before affairs at Avonmere resumed their usual course: before the last chaperon was gone and the last amazed questioner satisfied. The question-

ers were perhaps more difficult to deal with than the chaperons, and it was not until the tenth of Lady Mary's amazed repetitions of:

"But, my darling, what could you have been thinking of?" that Rosnah found inspiration and explanation.

"I did it," she confessed, "because I thought it would be a good opportunity to pay off a few old scores. These people have been very kind to me and I knew that some acknowledgment was due them."

"That was very sweet of you," replied her mother, "but why did you do it when your dear father and I were away?"

"Yes," asked the General, looking up from his *Times*. "Trying to steal a march on your old parents. Eh, miss?"

"I asked them," Rosnah began again, "one at a time. I never meant to bore the Duchess with them, she told me that she could not come; and I did not mean to inflict more than one of them upon the boys. I could quite well have taken care of one without giving anybody any trouble. I really meant well, mother dear; I never knew they would all change their silly minds and follow one another up the avenue like sheep. And the reason that I asked them—those particular ladies, I mean—while you were away, was that I feared they might bore dear papa."

"———," cried the General suddenly. "You

## ROSNAH

are a dear sweet child, they would have bored me; they bored me horribly at breakfast. And if everybody else in this house had as much consideration for my feelings as you have shown, it would be a very different place to live in. Come here, miss, and kiss your father, and here is a sovereign for you to buy some little knick-knacks when you next go to town." And when Rosnah had accepted the tip with as much embarrassment as she accepted the embrace, the General strutted out of the room, muttering as he went, "A—— fine young woman, by the Lord, and the very image, as I told the Potters, of my poor, dear, mother. The boys are a queer lot. A prig, a fop, a groom and a fool; Lady Mary is welcome to them. But the girl, by gad, sir, that girl is a fine young woman and absolutely devoted to me. Thought they would bore me, did she? Well, that is more than she ever does."

The "boys" perforce accepted this reason for the discomforts they had undergone on the preceding night; but Mrs. Potter, before going to bed in the room which Rosnah had vacated for her use, received a full and detailed account of her *protege's* adventure.

"It is delicious," she laughed, "absolutely delicious! You must be sure to let me hear from you every week and tell me how the plot thins or thickens. Lady Mary is to be congratulated, for she still has



## ROSNAH

a daughter to welcome, and she will have a charming son when Kevin marries Sheila. But the General:— the pompous, self-satisfied General! I saw his mother once, my dear, and I am afraid you won't be flattered when I tell you that she resembled poor dear George Eliot. And you know Ruskin said that *she* looked like a horse."

At the early breakfast, which the Potters' departure necessitated, only Lawrence and Desmond, of the boys, appeared. Lawrence had insisted upon understudying Peter Carey in driving to Kingstown, and Mrs. Potter absorbed together with her ham and eggs a clear and quick conception of Desmond's state of mind.

"'Tis my opinion, young sir," she remarked to him as he helped her to her place in the carriage, "that you ought to go a step further in collecting feminine relatives. You have done very well with a mother and a sister. I expect you to come to Walbeck Street in the winter and to show me what you can do in the way of a wife. Get Sheila to choose one for you."

"I'm trying to bring him to it," the girl interjected. "But he insists upon taking *me* to London with him."

"Well," was Mrs. Potter's cryptic answer, "let him do it if he can. He might do worse." And she was so delighted with her own wit and by Desmond's com-

## ROSTON

placency that her husband found time to utter his favorite remark without interruption.

"God bless my soul and burn my body," said Mr. Potter.

## XXIII

'T WAS in the prime of summer time, an evening calm and cool," and the Duchess of Clontarf was reclining at her full yet not superlative length in a deck chair under the trees. Her Grace was not asleep, but she was very quiet. The thrushes were bidding good night to one another and she loved the birds and the brooding old trees that sheltered them. High up in the sky the rooks were flapping their homeward way to the row of elms just inside the wall which separated the grounds of the Dower House from the public road, while softly from the paddock came the purr of Jerry's admonitions to the cow he was milking.

But the little Duchess was troubled. Not about her boys. In that case she would have had the advice and assistance of their admirable tutor. Her distress was caused by her sister; and in the guidance of Adelaide she had no assistance, not even the co-operation of her own self assurance. For though Adelaide was a dear, and loyal to the core, it was impossible that she should set great store by the ad-

## ROSNAH

vice of one whose own worldly wisdom had carried her no higher on the mount of happiness than to be, at thirty-six, the mother of two charming boys, the impoverished widow of a spendthrift Duke and the most popular Englishwoman who ever lived in Ireland. And yet Adelaide must be remonstrated with and the Duchess viewed the leisurely and opportune approach of that pink-clad maiden with considerable apprehension.

"Ducky, dear," began Adelaide in the crispest of crisp accents, "I have told Mary to bring the tea out here. I knew you would never have come in at a reasonable hour and I am famished."

"Draw up that chair," commanded her sister, "and account for the last four hours. At two o'clock you left the luncheon table and your sister's sheltering roof. It is now nearly six. Where were you during the interval?"

"I have been driving," Miss Lytton answered. "Has anyone called? Mary tells me there were no letters." And she settled herself comfortably in another cushioned chair.

"With whom?" queried Her Grace, declining to be lured by either of these byways of conversation.

"With Lawrence Fitzgerald," the culprit answered, with the directness which is the highest art. "We hardly noticed how late it was growing. Now, Ducky, don't wrinkle your forehead."

## ROSNAH

"My dear," the Duchess began with visible effort, "I should be the last person in the world—"

By a triumph of art Adelaide managed to look outraged, ill-treated, ill-judged, as she interrupted:

"Whenever you or the *mater* begin a conversation with that: 'I should be the last person in the world to interfere with your pleasure,' I know what is coming: Advice or admonitions."

"Please, dear," urged the Duchess, "please be gentle and listen to me. I was only going to ask you to leave Lawrence Fitzgerald alone. You have worked your will with the other three sons; you have even encouraged the fatherly blandishments of the General, and you were perfectly right to do it. I enjoyed seeing you bring them to terms. But don't encourage Lawrence. The boy does not understand you and you will break his heart. He is too nice to be hurt. Let him alone, Adelaide."

"My dearest Ducky," laughed Miss Lytton, "you're ridiculous about these tenants of yours. You're a disgrace to the well ordered class of Irish landlord. And besides, if you are so interested in Lawrence you should not try to interfere with his education. If you had a spark of the true feeling of your caste you would raise the rent of Avonmere in consideration of the advantage derived from my society and then—if they refuse to pay—evict them. That's your true landlord. Enjoy your rights!"

## ROSNAH

"I can't, you know," laughed the Duchess, partly amused and all distressed by this tirade. "I—"

"Oh, you!" taunted Adelaide, "you've no spirit. No proper feeling. You pamper your tenant. You should trample upon him, evict him, seize his cattle, tear off his roof, brow-beat him generally. You've all the cringing manner of a French innkeeper. Oh, I'm *ashamed* of you."

"I don't wonder," said her sister. "But we are not discussing me and my short-comings; we are talking about Lawrence Fitzgerald. I wonder if you know as much about him as he and Sheila and Lady Mary have told me. I fancy not, for I've seen a good deal of your methods and I have noticed that you are generally the topic of conversation."

"Tell me what you know about him," Adelaide urged. "I have always wondered at your knack of getting people to talk to you about themselves and their affairs. So now, be a darling and tell me what you know about Lawrence. I never can get him to show the slightest interest in himself."

"Well, in the first place," began Her Grace, "he is thirty years old and unmarried—"

"You amaze me," cried Adelaide.

"He was reared by an uncle in Galway; a rich, bad-tempered, good-hearted old gentleman who prefers a horse to any human being, except Lawrence. They lived in a bare castle sort of place, dreadfully

## ROSNAH

uncomfortable and draughty, built out on a rocky point with a portcullis affair which cuts them off from the rest of the world and which the old gentleman was in the habit of drawing up when anything irritated him and of keeping up for weeks at a time. Lawrence has always had plenty of books and plenty of music, for the old man is a great student and a thoroughly trained musician, but of society he has had nothing except during the hunting season. And can you guess, Adelaide—or has he perhaps told you—with whom he has hunted almost constantly during the last two seasons?”

Adelaide shook her head.

“He never spoke to me of hunting.”

“Then, with no less a personage than Her Majesty, Elizabeth, Empress of Austria.”

“The Empress of Austria,” echoed Adelaide. “He hunts with the Empress of Austria? Of course one knows that she comes over to Ireland for the hunting season.”

“Exactly,” smiled Her Grace, “and our friend Lawrence has often acted as her ‘pilot’ in the field. He tells me she is very charming and that he expects to see her when next he goes to Vienna with his uncle. The old gentleman’s only relaxation is to travel and to revisit with Lawrence the scenes of his—well—interesting youth.”

“And to think,” marvelled Adelaide, “that he

## ROSNAH

never even mentioned the Empress to me! I have seen her once or twice; the handsomest, saddest looking woman with gorgeous eyes and a wonderful figure. And Lawrence knows her! To think that I have known him all these weeks and discovered nothing about him, whereas you, why, you could write his biography."

"And a very interesting biography it would be, too," said Her Grace, "with a hero who spends a month or two in the Courts of Europe every year and lives for the rest with grooms and stablemen, except when he is hunting with an Empress. He speaks French, German and Italian, and he can, when he wishes to, use English which would be a credit to Addison. And yet, I think, for all his travels, he has never met anyone like you, and that you are very likely to hurt him; and so again I say, let him alone."

"I am not going to hurt him," Miss Lytton protested. "I like him as much as you do. He has a heart of gold and the gentlest, most chivalrous instincts. He is so jolly, so unaffected. Not a bit like that prig of a Desmond or that popinjay of a Gerald. Not a bit like any of them."

"I had noticed that," remarked the Duchess. "And I think the General observes it also."

"Poof! The General, bedad," laughed Adelaide. "Who cares for the opinion of that old pepper cas-

## ROSNAH

ter. I like Lawrence better than the whole of the rest of them."

"Adelaide, Adelaide," cried the Duchess. "I have no objection to your admiring him, but I do object to your imitating his brogue. So, I fancy, would he."

"Not a bit of him," her sister laughed, "he enjoys it. We have the jolliest times together. He teaches me the accent of Connemarra and I teach him the accent of Belgrave, which, you tell me now, he knows quite well already."

"Well, let his emotions alone, whatever you do to his accent," warned her gentle monitor. "I've seen his type oftener than you have, and he will be dangerous, dour, and unmanageable if you flirt with him."

"Then you may flirt with him yourself after your own innocuous method," Adelaide answered lightly, "for here he is. He spoke of coming down to tea."

"You asked him," accused her sister, "you urged him to come so that you might be rude to him—for my misleading *bien entendu*—but I warn you, I shall not be in the least misled, and, by the way, how marvellously changed he is."

"Thank you, dear," said Adelaide, demurely.

"Oh, you demon!" replied the Duchess. "The poor, poor boy. Some grooms, some books, his un-



## ROSNAH

cle, the Empress of Austria, and now you. Poor child!"

The figure approaching through the breast-high hedges of the old garden was that of a tall young man and a strong young man, and to the uninformed he did not much resemble an object of pity. He looked the thirty years with which the Duchess credited him, and he was of the dark, almost foreign looking type, which still occasionally crops out in Ireland to bear witness to the fact that the survivors of King Phillip's Spanish Armada found wives and homes and happiness in the Emerald Isle, while their ships were rotting upon its coast.

He was dressed correctly enough, but with a certain floridness of detail; the bright bit of silk in his breast pocket and the gold horseshoe in his stock would, had they not been contradicted by an easiness of manner and of movement, have made his place in the social scale difficult to determine. His actions, his poise, his carriage and his instincts were all gentlemanly. His speech, or such of it as he used in daily converse, veered close upon the groom; and Adelaide Lytton, the spoiled, the courted, toasted, Adelaide, never wearied of watching as he oscillated from one estate to the other.

"My dear Ducky," she asked her sister now, as she had so often asked herself, "*what* is he?"

"Dangerous," answered Her Grace as she stretched

## ROSNAH

her hand toward the new arrival. A hand which he bent to kiss with an old world deference learned from his uncle, and a very modern affection invented by himself. For the tenants of Avonmere most heartily reciprocated their landlord's kindly interest.

"I want to thank you," said he in the sad slow accent of Galway, "for your kind message. A message from Your Grace is the one thing with a command. So when Miss Lytton says to me: 'Her Grace sends her compliments, and will Mr. Lawrence Fitzgerald come to tea this evening,' of course Mr. Lawrence Fitzgerald came with joy and pleasure. All the more so," he went on, establishing himself upon a garden bench in easy proximity to both the tea table and the lady of his choice. "All the more so, since there were visitors in droves and dozens at the house. I'd liefer be here. It's so quite."

"So it is," the Duchess acquiesced, but Adelaide interposed mischievously:

"Quite what?"

"Quite quite," said he.

"Oh, but quite, quite, quite," Her Grace maintained with quick kindness for her guest and a warning glance at her sister. "I was thinking that just as Adelaide came out."

"Then you stopped thinking it soon after," he laughed, "for you'd be listening to her a fairish long time before you'd think of 'kind nature's sweet restorer' or anything of that sort."

## ROSNAH

### XXIV

**H**ERE was not much society near Step-Aside, but such as there was made haste to call and to fall captive, according to its age or sex, to some portion of the family. There were guests in plenty, and before six weeks passed the General took a flying trip to London to order a huge consignment of clothes in which to do justice to the round of dinners, dances, croquet, tennis, archery and other frivolities which filled the days.

To all these innocent diversions it was Lawrence's pride to drive the chestnut four with Lady Mary or Rosnah on the box-seat beside him. There had been a flower show in a distant part of the county, and there, in the rose tent, the General had been so securely button-holed by a fellow officer that Lawrence had been unable to detach him until nearly five o'clock and he was obliged to drive steadily and rapidly in order to reach home in time to dress for dinner. The horses were galloping up a long hill which ended in a little village several miles from Avonmere when strange cries and curt commands made themselves heard even above the jingling and the jangling of pole chains, wheels and hoofs. A turn in the road brought them upon a scene of more life and activity than they had yet encountered in all their driving.

## ROSNAH

A little hovel by the roadside was the centre of disturbance. It seemed deserted and several men in the dark uniforms of the constabulary were removing such piteous shreds of furniture as it contained; laying them in the little garden before the door where they looked pathetically old and worn in their bed of wild white phlox and yellow mustard. Neighbors stood about looking on with grim hopelessness. The women were crying into their shawls and it was to them and to the men engaged in carrying the furniture that the harsh commands were addressed. They were issued by a tall man who lounged, chewing a straw, against a tree. When he saw the four-in-hand with its air of importance and prosperity, he bestirred himself and came forward to report:

"It's a very stubborn case, sir," he told the General, the authority of whose fierce eyeglass he instantly recognized. "We've done this job twice before and here we are at it again. This tenant goes back as soon as we are well away. I've sent for some soldiers from the barracks and when they come we'll do it for good and all."

"Good Gad, sir," cried the General, "what are you afraid of? What is there to frighten you in those poor devils there?"

"They're nasty devils when they're roused," the bailiff answered, "and several of them have muskets in those cabins of theirs."

## ROSNAH

Rosnah, from her place beside Lawrence, turned to him for explanation.

"What is it?" she cried. "What is going on here? What are those men doing?"

"It's an eviction," he answered with his eyes on his horses' ears. "I wish to goodness I had you and mother well home out of it."

"An eviction?" she repeated. "Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do? How shall we stop it?"

"We can't," he answered. "We can only get away from it."

But the road was narrow and before the coach was again in motion all chance of escape was shut off by the spectacular arrival of fifteen or twenty scarlet clad soldiers who rode up alert, curious, wondering what work lay before them. When they understood that they were to assist at an eviction the language which rose around the carriage was startling. Even Cagney and the General were lost in wonder.

At a word from their leader the soldiers stationed themselves at ten-foot intervals about the little house and the bailiff nodded to his two men. With a gesture of sulky protest they vanished into the darkness of the little hut. A wail went up from the assembled women; a wail of many voices crying: "The Lord be good to her!" "Och, woman dear, it's what must come to us all." "Oh, the devil fly away with the dirty blackguards." "Glory be to goodness," and

## ROSNAH

"Wira sthrue." But when the two constables reappeared with their prey, even the men swelled the chorus with, "Och, the crathur, the crathur!"

She was a poor, frightened little wisp of an old woman, barefooted and wrapped in a scrap of shawl. Her weak eyes caught the gleam of red and brightened for a moment wistfully, but darkened when she saw the bailiff still chewing his straw under the tree.

"Mrs. O'Donnell," he blustered when he caught her glance, "this is the second time we've had to come here to tell you to pay your rent or leave the premises. We put you out three days ago. What brought ye back?"

She looked piteously at one of her warders, freed the arm the other held and raised a trembling hand to her trembling mouth.

"Answer me. What brought ye back?" commanded the bailiff, and the man she had turned to urged:

"Mrs. O'Donnell, ma'am, for the love of Heaven, don't anger him. Give me a word I can screech at him if you're anyways wake in yourself. Do now, ma'am, dear."

Thus encouraged she whispered to him and he transmitted:

"She had no place to go."

An old woman in the crowd broke from the restraining hands of her friends, scaled the tumble-

## ROSNAH

down, over-grown stone wall, shook a defiant fist at the soldier, who half-heartedly tried to stop her, and stumbled up to Mrs. O'Donnell.

"Ann, dear, Ann, dear," she cried, "you're to come an' stop with me. You'd be as welcome, machree, as the flowers of May, for as long as ye'd stop."

"Father," cried Rosnah suddenly, "can't you stop them? Tell them who you are. Tell them to go away—"

"I'm not on active service, my dear," he replied. "This is not my district. These men know what they're about, I dare say."

"Are you going to let them continue?" asked the girl. "Are you going to sit here and let them do this thing? Oh, if Desmond were only here."

"Hush, dear," Lady Mary urged. "We can do nothing now. You see, her old friends will take care of her. Oh, merciful Heavens, have pity!" she cried suddenly, as Lawrence, trying to spare her this last and worst shock, urged his horses forward. But he was too late. She had seen the bailiff nod again to one of his men; had seen the man throw something upon the low thatched roof; had seen Mrs. O'Donnell turn and, with a wild shriek, bury her head in her friend's breast. Rosnah, looking back, saw that the soldiers had formed in the road again and were trotting away from the trampled garden while from

## ROSNAH

Mrs. O'Donnell's burning roof the smoke was rising, heavy and black, into the shining amber of the sky.

The Fitzgeralds were silent until they neared the gates of Avonmere. Then Gerald spoke.

"That was most dramatic," he remarked approvingly. "I've seen things very like it on the stage and in Millet's paintings. It was capital. The bare feet were especially happy."

"Don't, dear," his mother interrupted. "I know you are not serious—"

"But I am," he assured her. And then asked idly: "I wonder where Owen's got to by this time? He stayed behind there, you know. I wish I had. It was a great piece of stage management. Did you notice the rise and fall of the chorus? No music, you know. Only the rhythm. Wonderful! I'll have to make Owen tell me more about it when I see him."

But Owen did not return to Avonmere until very late. Dinner was long over and the General and Lady Mary were reading in the drawing room the others wandered about the garden. He looked so dangerous, so wild, when he came into the light of the lamps that the General shook off his glasses and glared at his last born.

"I'm glad, my boy," said Lady Mary, "that you stayed to do what you could for that poor distraught creature. Is she more comfortable now?"



## ROSNAH

"Yes, much," he answered.

"I must inquire into the case," said the General pompously. "It's out of my district, as I said, but I intend to discover how a woman of her years was so alone. Had she no children? No relatives? I must inquire—"

"I can tell you," Owen answered. "She had nine sons. Nine sons she bore and reared in that little house. And three of them died in Africa, two in Afghanistan, and four in the Siege of Delhi. Soldiers, all of them. Soldiers of the Queen."

"Good Gad, sir," cried the General, "are you sure? The mother of nine soldiers!"

"Sure," echoed his son. "Look at this. Look at what Father Dan took out of her poor old hand and asked me to show to you. See! A battered old cross and the name John O'Donnell on the edge, September 14, 1857. The Victoria Cross. The price of her oldest son."

"Cagney," yelled the General, making for the door. "Cagney, the carriage! Master Owen has found the mother of poor John O'Donnell, the third man at Delhi."

"Wait!" cried Owen. "You're too late. She died an hour ago. She died thinking those beasts of soldiers who burned her house were her boys come home from the wars!"

And he fell to crying bitterly with his head in his mother's lap.

## ROSNAH

### XXV

**M**R. OWEN," said a soft little voice coming apparently from the leg of the bed. "Mr. Owen, you're to get up, sir."

Owen turned listlessly to the side from which the summons seemed to come and beheld the top of a red and tousled head.

"Ah, you, Michael Dwyer," said he, "and how do you happen to be here?"

"Katy-parlor-maid was fer keepin' me out, sir," the explanation began, "but I tould her it was the Ould Gentleman himself sent me for you."

"The Old Gentleman? That has a sinister sound. And he wants me? I'm not surprised. Climb up and tell me more about it. You don't look much like the Great Last Messenger."

Michael Dwyer Carey, thus encouraged, swarmed up the bed post and perched grinning upon its top. Owen glanced at his watch; nine; then out through the broad window; sunshine. So the long black feverish night was over. Such a night! The worst, so far, he told himself. More heat and restlessness, sleep more broken; dreams more terrible and the sick disinclination to take up life again stronger, more paralyzing, than ever before.

"Thank you, old chap," said he. "If you don't mind I think I'll stay here."

## ROSNAH

"The Ould Gintleman does be always in his bed," remarked Michael Dwyer conversationally. "He never gets up at all at all, and if one of yous never gets up the two of yous'll never see each other. An' he wants to see ye. He sent me for ye. So you're to get up, if you please, Mr. Owen."

"Very well," yawned Owen, "I'll get up and go with you." He was growing accustomed to strange messages leading to stranger interviews and his knowledge of the people and conditions in the forlorn little village would have amazed the General and alarmed Desmond.

His friendship with Michael Dwyer Carey had originated in the protection of a white "chuchen," until then sole object of Michael's love, which had foregathered with the General's larger herd and been marked for slaughter by the General's poultryman. Michael Dwyer's shrieks of pleading and abuse produced no effect upon the unemotional poultryman who, beside being unemotional, was deaf and dumb, and Anna Maria's slender neck was actually on the block when Owen appeared and reprieved her.

Thereafter he was frequently conscious of being followed by a friendly pair of blue eyes when he strolled or sat in the garden and by a pair of bare and sturdy legs when he roamed further afield. Once, in a desolate and treeless strip of bog, Owen had

## ROSNAH

wheeled suddenly and retraced his long steps to the tiny figure which stood, petrified, in his wake.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded with mock severity. "Don't you know that you are a long way from home?"

"It was Anna Maria, sir," faltered Michael Dwyer in a passable imitation of his father Adam, "she does be liking to come down here, sir, to be catchin' crawleys in the pools." And in proof of this statement he released his pet from some remote fastness of his whip-cord attire. She fluttered away with a great chattering and he, eyeing her half in pride and half in anger, apostrophized her:

"An' will ye look what ye done to me now! Bring-in' me out here in the way where nobody wants me at all. Sure why couldn't ye stay paicable in the stable yard, where nobody would be askin' a body what were they doin' there? It's heart scalded ye have me, Anna Maria, an' that's the truth."

"She must be an unusual hen," commented Owen, "to be fond of the water."

"She is, sir," Michael agreed, and then as Anna Maria, with every feather expressing fear and disgust made her scurrying way toward home and *terra firma*, he cried: "An' will you look at her now, changin' her mind on me and leavin' me here where nobody wants me!" And then Michael Dwyer Carey belied his noble name by dropping forlornly down upon a

## ROSNAH

half dry hummock and weeping long and loud. There was but one thing to do, and Owen, free from the observation of feminine and critical eyes, did it tenderly and well. Thereafter they fared forth together, often hand in hand, and Step-Aside soon learned that the straightest way to Owen's alms and benevolence was *via* Michael Dwyer Carey. The tall boy and the red-topped child soon grew to be a familiar part of the landscape, and wherever they went they left comfort and peace. And Anna Maria followed them.

But on this bright June morning they passed the black doorways of the village, and turned in at a gateway so overgrown with grass and creeper, so blocked by shrub and broken wall as to be almost indistinguishable. Owen had noticed the high-walled, deserted seeming place in his ramblings and had set it down as the estate of some ruined or self-exiled family. But Michael Dwyer trotted forward with an elate familiarity and dragged his companion up a grass grown avenue. The trees towered over them magnificently, weeds and underbrush obscured the spaces where had once been lawn or vista, and a long-legged colt, startled by their approach, ran whinnying back to its mother, who was grazing in the grassy basin of a broken fountain.

On through a tangle of shrubbery Michael went, and Owen followed, bending and turning as the na-

## ROSNAH

ture of the path demanded, until at last they debouched upon a terrace edged by a balustrade of marble, broken and time stained, with here and there a low-backed bench or a quaint statue. Below stretched the gardens, long run to seed, and beyond them tier upon tier of terrace, all set out with urns and seats and steps of marble, led up to the house.

Owen dropped at the foot of a one-armed satyr on a headless goat and stared about him in sheer amazement. For this was witchery. These box-hedges high as trees, these rioting poppies, clambering roses, tangles of all growing sweetness, were fairyland. The great brooding house was the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. In the centre of the garden was another fountain set evidently above a spring, for the water had overflowed its boundaries and all around the flowers grew tall and pale and lank and ghastly in the sunshine.

In and out through this jungle of hedge and walk and bed the path which Michael and Owen had been following led on to the house, and along this Michael now proceeded to lead his puzzled companion. Of one thing Owen was already assured. The path was never made by the feet of men. In dozens of places it was crossed by a branch shoulder high. In others it was so small a space between tree and wall or gate and post that even the slender Owen could scarce follow it.

## ROSNAH

On the highest of the terraces Michael Dwyer released Anna Maria, who scampered with wildly outstretched neck to some back region whence there floated on the air the shrill barking of a dog and the consequential clucking of many "chuchens." There was no other sign of life. The sun shone hotly down upon the marble pavement of the esplanade, little breezes shook the trails of ivy dangling from urn and wall, a thrush was singing exultantly in a knarled white-holly tree. And still Michael Dwyer pressed forward and still Owen followed him. Through a hall all hung about with torn banners and noble portraits, gem-studded shields and archaic weapons. Everywhere was wealth and exquisite taste. Up a wide stairway Michael's bare feet pattered and Owen presently found himself standing in the doorway of a great state bedroom, through whose tall windows he saw again the overgrown garden and the neglected park.

## XXVI

**I**N THE centre of the room was a four-post bed curtained in heavy green. Upon the green coverlet sat a ragged little boy. Propped up on the spotless pillows and wrapped in a dressing gown of gold-embroidered green satin was a handsome gen-

## ROSNAH

tleman of some sixty years. He and the ragged little boy were absorbedly playing with regiments, battalions, whole armies, of tin soldiers. With the ease of long custom Michael climbed up beside the other ragged little boy.

"He's here," Michael Dwyer Carey announced laconically, and Owen found himself returning the regard of the most brilliant, hopeless, restless eyes which he had ever seen. As he advanced to the foot of the bed the gentleman raised himself upon his pillows and examined his visitor. With absolute gravity yet absolute courtesy, he turned to Michael Dwyer Carey:

"This is your Mr. Owen?" he asked, and as Owen was about to reply he went on still addressing the child: "You will tell him, if you will be so kind, that I am glad to welcome him, though I cannot speak to him. It is years since I have spoken to an adult. Tell him that he is the first person of man's stature who has crossed my threshold for ten years. Ask him to draw up a chair, and warn him that, if he has any communication to make to me, he must do so through your intervention. I have severed my connection with the world of men." And thereupon this kindly misanthrope drew his green and gold wrappings more closely about him and returned, with every evidence of pleasure and excitement, to his play.



## ROSNAH

Owen Fitzgerald had never before found himself *en tête-à-tête* with a lunatic, and none of the rules he had heard laid down for the guidance of persons so situated seemed adapted to his present need. So he turned, with a sense of pleasant exhilaration to obey his host's behest and discovered that all the chairs in the room, though normal in other regards, had been shortened to half their original height. Feeling more and more like a man in a fairy tale he drew one of the tallest of these within conversational distance of the bed and seated himself, greatly to the amusement of Michael Dwyer and his confrere, who regarded Owen's surplus length of leg as specially designed for their entertainment.

"My dear Michael," Owen began, lending himself whimsically to his host's whim, "I must ask you to convey my regards to your friend and to assure him that, although it affords me the keenest pleasure to meet him, I should never have thought of intruding upon him without the invitation, almost the command, which you delivered to me."

"And you may tell Mr. Owen Fitzgerald that what he says is quite true," the cultured voice of the invalid interrupted before the interpreter's lip had ceased from trembling over its inability to make "since nor sound" of this message. "You may inform him that it is for the enforcement of this formality that the arsenal beside the pillow is kept there

## • ROSNAH

—loaded. Mr. Fitzgerald will understand that in the first few years of my retirement I found it difficult to avoid unwelcome visitors. This will be further explained to Mr. Fitzgerald if you will mention that I have several living relatives and that the property is not entailed.”

During the delivery of this address the attention of the interpreter wandered to the tin soldiers and the ragged boy. Nothing daunted the patient addressed to the back of a red and tousled head the courteous phrases:

“I am forced to interrupt you, my young friend. I require your kind offices, I want you to present me in due form to our guest. I beg you to tell him that Cormac McCormac—The McCormac, to be exact—is glad to see his new neighbor and that only the habit of years and a vow taken at a period of great stress of spirit prevents The McCormac from taking Mr. Fitzgerald by the hand and saying so.”

Owen started. So this was The McCormac of whom he had heard so much. The man who suddenly, in mid career of pleasure, extravagance, politics and popularity, had turned hermit. There had been rumors that he was alive, but very few knew where or how he lived. From time to time it was whispered that his influence might still be traced in the affairs of the nation; that his wealth found channels unsuspected by organized relief boards and un-

## ROSNAH

acknowledged by political parties. But no one saw him; no one knew him. And Owen, the hot-hearted, made haste to respond:

"And will you assure The McCormac that I am deeply sensible of the honor he does me. That the sound of his great name stirs me as it must stir any man who loves his unfortunate country and the men who have loved her. That history has made me familiar with the bearers of that name who are no more. And that I have met with many men and women who feel that Ireland lost a great fortress and a great ornament, when The McCormac turned his back upon her."

The dark eyes under the white hair flashed ominously and the battles, sieges and retreats which were progressing among the hills and valleys of the green coverlid were all upset as by an earthquake. A long arm shot out; and, catching Michael Dwyer by a shoulder, turned his face to Owen:

"You tell him," the older man thundered, "that The McCormac never deserted Ireland. That he has stayed with her when nearly all his class has left her. Tell him that I would gladly die for her, as many a better man has died, if my dying could do her any good. I lived for her once. I staked everything—life, hope, future, youth and something dearer than all these—upon an attempt to free her. And failed. I have not left this house since I knew that I had

## ROSNAH

failed to give her back her place among the nations of the world. And now there is no hope of that. She is ruined! Beggared! Beggared in an age when poverty is crime. She, the dainty, sensitive, laughter-making, music-loving, lady of the nations held peniless in England's power! If she yield to England then she may have money and leisure and comfort for as long as England cares to give them. Those are the terms they dare to suggest to the purest land the sun ever shone on. Aye, or that clouds ever lowered over. Ill-treated, ill-nourished, ill-dressed and ill-served!"

"Ill-served?" repeated Owen.

"Aye, ill-served. What are the men who serve her? Where are the sons of her old nobility? What messengers has she to state her case to the world? Look at your members of Parliament. Who are they? Who ever heard their names? How are *they* to understand her moods; minister to her wants. If a man of higher rank tries to serve her, what is his fate? What happened to Mitchell, to Emmet, to Lord Edward Fitzgerald, to the hundreds and hundreds of men like you and me who tried to free our mother? What did they do to me, twenty years ago? What are they doing now to young Parnell? What are they saying of him? He has gone to America to beg—God help us all—to *beg* for Ireland; for the Emerald Gem; and what are they doing? Helping

## ROSNAH

him? No! Jeering at him! Discrediting him, lying about him, sneering at him. Even her begging poor Innisfail must do of England! She is to get help from no one else. Her spirit *must* be broken. She *must* be forced to yield. And lest she die before she can admit that she is conquered, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Duchess of Marlborough stand one on either side of her and keep the breath in her poor tortured body with drops and crumbs from the Relief Funds. Bah! They learned that trick from the old inquisitors. Relief Funds!" he cried, with so angry a vehemence that Michael Dwyer and the dirty little boy prudently crawled under the bed and the soldiers fell in a leaden torrent to the floor. "I tell you, sir—or rather Michael would if he were here—that the revenue drawn out of Ireland in one year—the rents, the taxes, the crops, the labor, the blood and spirit and youth—would keep this country in plenty and comfort for years. Where are the young men who ought to be tilling these fertile fields? Dead in Afghanistan or dying in chain gangs in Australia. Where are the young women, born to mate with these young men? Working in the factories of England or living out at service in America. And I ask you, sir—or, pardon me, Michael Dwyer will ask you when he rejoins us—what is to be the end of it all? How soon will want and pain break down principle?"

## ROSNAH

"Never, sir," cried Owen. "I don't know why you sent for me. I have but recently come to Ireland, but I have gone about among the people here. I have attended meetings and spoken to the leaders of the several movements—"

"Michael Dwyer will tell you that I had been so informed," responded The McCormac. "And that it was precisely on that account that I have so outrageously trespassed upon your time. I read all the papers, English, Irish, American and French. You may be surprised to learn that from the press of France and America one can obtain the best accounts of the fortunes of this unhappy land. But the papers no longer satisfy me. And my friends, the children, brought many stories of your interest in the people and affairs of the district. Hence my message to you. You will, I trust, indulge the fancy of an old man and—talk. You saw the O'Donnell eviction, I am told. Talk first of that."

Owen was nothing loath, and as the men's voices dropped to normal pitch again the interpreter and his ally returned to their game. Presently, however, the smaller boy wandered away on some mission not entirely unrelated to bread and jam, and Michael was left alone in the war-torn country. Presently yet again he curled up against the footboard of the bed and went to sleep, all oblivious to his importance in the conversation. But asleep or awake he was

## ROSNAH

still urged to "Inform Mr. Fitzgerald, if you will be so kind—" or to "Set clearly before Mr. McCormac, my dear Michael."

When Owen, once more escorted by Michael, was passing down the stairs he met a grim man-servant carrying a luncheon tray. The man seemed so alarmed, so terrified even, by the apparition of a stranger that Owen spoke to him:

"I trust that my visit will not upset your master—"

But the man, with a shrug of noncomprehension, went on his way and the guide spoke.

"He's a dummy," said Michael Dwyer.

"Deaf and dumb?" queried Owen.

"That," said Michael Dwyer, "an' worse," he added.

"Not blind? Surely not blind?"

"No, Frinch," said Michael. "And his wife's a Frinch dummy, too. The two of them's all there is in it. Will ye bide here, sir, till I go an' git Anna Maria?"

And presently Owen returned to the world of real things *via* the path worn by the feet of little children. On his way through the tangle of park and garden he met four small visitors, all of whom stared at him, much as the man servant had done, and he regained the open highway in a state of somnambulism. But he was quickly restored to consciousness

## ROSNAH

of time and place by a vision of the Duchess of Clontarf in her pony carriage coming round a turn in the road. She hailed him gaily, and as he accepted her invitation and took his place beside her, she asked:

"What were you doing in the McCormac grounds?"

"Visiting The McCormac."

"Impossible," laughed Her Grace. "He would have shot you on sight."

"On the contrary," answered Owen, "he invited me on hearsay. And I have spent the most amazing morning of my life. Will you tell me what you know about The McCormac?"

"I will if you will come home with me to luncheon," she stipulated. "Adelaide has deserted me in favor of your father's picnic at 'The Dargle.' The boys and Mr. Lovell are off on the moors. I'll exchange with you the most exclusive information about our eccentric neighbor in consideration of the pleasure of your society."

"I can offer you a higher bribe," said he. "Mother and I were to have been alone. She had a headache and I stayed with her. At least," he amended ruefully, "I intended to stay with her until The McCormac sent for me. But I must go back to her now. Say you'll come."

"How can I," Her Grace objected, "unless she



## ROSNAH

asks me? But I'll drive you home and then if she—without any prompting or hinting on your part, mind that—should take pity on my lonely state, then of course I'll stay. For you have one of the most charming women in the world for a mother."

"Isn't she?" cried Owen with more feeling than grammar.

## XXVII

**A**S THE ponies trotted up the avenue Lady Mary, in a flutter of sprigged muslin and cherry colored ribbons, appeared upon the terrace. She had not at all a bereft or a lonely look and Owen's conscience was as clear as the Duchess's greeting when he announced:

"O mother dear, here's the Duchess. I found her in floods of tears on the road and persuaded her to come up and let you comfort her."

"Dear Lady Mary," cried Her Grace, "you have a very wicked son. Indeed, it is not true."

"Floods of tears," Owen insisted. "And no wonder. She's abandoned by all she ever loved, and there's not a crust of lunch in the Dower House. I promised not to ask you to ask her to luncheon, but I might as well tell you that she has promised to stay if you do."

## ROSNAH

"I do. Most emphatically I do," beamed Lady Mary. "John will send the ponies to the stable and we'll be as cozy as possible together."

"And I'll entertain you," Owen declared. "I've had *such* an adventure, mother dear! It will entertain you both for ever so long to hear about it."

So Lady Mary persuaded and the Duchess yielded. For of all the tenants whom time and the passing years had brought to Avonmere her Grace most enjoyed the Fitzgeralds. She was devoted to Lady Mary. She and Rosnah were the most comfortable of companions. The General amused her with his mixture of gallantry and ill-temper. And the four young sons, each heartily admiring the pretty landlord and the landlord's pretty sister made life very pleasant and the days very full.

When Owen had told his story he turned to the Duchess:

"You promised," he reminded her, "to tell me all you know about The McCormac. Is his illness incurable Or his insanity?"

"To begin with," she responded, "he is as well and as sane as you or I. Now you must remember that I never saw him; he went to bed before I came to this part of the world; but my husband knew him as the greatest of beaux, the maddest of riders and the most hospitable of hosts. He was a member of Parliament for this county and a great friend of the

## ROSNAH

Plunketts. It was 'Herself' who told me most about him. She still corresponds with him, I believe."

"To my mind," said Lady Mary, "there is something very distasteful in the thought of twenty years spent in bed without any reason. It seems to me a deliberate shirking of all the opportunities and responsibilities of life. Twenty years! There has been a great deal to do in the last twenty years!"

"But he considers that he has reason," the Duchess set forth. She waited, filling the time with inconsequential gossip, until the servants had left the room and then proceeded: "He was the leader in an uprising which led to nothing but a few obscure deaths and an embittering of English feeling—already bitter enough—toward Ireland. One of those foolish, mad attempts which do so much harm and so little, little good."

"Isn't it a blessing," interrupted Lady Mary, "that all that sort of thing is dying out?"

"It is," cried Her Grace, who had long been involved in the family conspiracy. "Indeed and indeed it is. And then," she continued hastily, not daring to go deeply into politics; "he, having contrived to get an ugly wound, was put to bed until the fever should have abated. And lying there with no one to talk to and nothing to occupy his mind save vain regrets and self revilings, he came to the conclusion that he was a fool—and so, of course, he

## ROSNAH

had been. He had walked tamely into a trap set for him and destroyed the hopes of his followers and the plans of his commanders. And all because he trusted a traitor. So, he lay in his big bed and decided that as long as he stayed there he would do no harm. He dismissed all his servants except his deaf and dumb Swiss valet, whose deaf and dumb wife came from Switzerland to assist him. And there he is, year after year carrying out his self-imposed penance and acting the part of fairy God-father to all the children in the vicinity. He had so loved and trusted the man who betrayed him that he swore never to talk to another adult. But to the children he is kindness itself. He teaches them, amuses them, feeds them and clothes them. I shall not soon forget the scene I had with my Eric when the 'Children's ould Gintleman,' as the people call him, measured him against the bedpost and inexorably but kindly decreed him banished—no longer a child. George's dismissal came earlier and was less stormy, but Eric was inconsolable for weeks."

"And now that he has sent for Owen," interrupted Lady Mary, "do you think he intends to get up?"

"I hardly think he could, after all those years. Dr. O'Connor doubts if he could walk now even if he desired to. It's something about muscles and exercise. Not that Dr. O'Connor has seen him," laughed the narrator. "He tried to. Once, when

## ROSNAH

he first took over the practice. He allowed his curiosity to persuade him that it was contrary to the tenets of his profession and his religion to allow a fellow creature to languish solitary on the bed of pain. The fellow creature peppered him, first with bird shot, then with buck shot, and Doctor O'Connor retired just before the dum-dum fusilade began."

"Good gracious!" cried Lady Mary. "I cannot approve of Owen's striking up a friendship with a person of such violent passions. Promise me, dear, that you will see no more of him."

"Oh! but I cannot promise that," he answered. "I never knew so fascinating a man. All sorts of things I've puzzled over are as clear as crystal to him. He has read so much and thought so much that he is a living epitome of history and legend."

"But you must remember," warned the Duchess, "that his judgment of men and causes was at fault years ago and that a life spent in vain regrets and inactivity is not likely to improve his worldly wisdom."

"A looker on," Owen suggested, "sees most of the game."

"But he has not been looking on. He has only seen what the papers say. And what do they know?" scoffed Her Grace.

"That is precisely why he sent for me. He wants *viva voce* evidence—"

## ROSNAH

"Poor creature!" sighed Lady Mary. "Does he still think that the country is unsettled? What a trying sort of insanity! I hope you were able to make him understand the truth."

"I tried to," answered Owen dutifully.

"That's my clever boy!" said his mother rising and leading the way into the hall. "And now how shall we entertain our guest? Greenhouses, my dear? Or the poultry yard? They tell me that a new family of little ducks came out last night."

"The ducks, by all means," chose Owen. "Don't you agree, Lady Ducky?"

## XXVIII

**D**R. OWEN, SIR," panted Michael Dwyer very late on the same afternoon, overtaking his patron strolling toward the wood with a fishing rod and a book of verses, "Mr. Owen, sir, Miss Judy wants you."

"Oh! come now, old chap," Owen remonstrated, "aren't you rather overdoing it? The Old Gentleman this morning and now this Miss Judy."

"Please, sir, no, sir," Michael Dwyer insisted. "Miss Judy called to me over the hedge, and me goin' of a message for me mother. 'Micky,' says she, 'present Miss Judith McMahon's compliments

## ROSNAH

to the young gentleman as wint to see The McCormac this morning and ask him to call immejite, if convejite.' ”

“Miss Judith McMahon,” repeated Owen blankly; “I never even heard of her. Is she,” he asked with some curiosity, “is she young, Michael?”

“Middlin’,” answered Michael, “but James Roach is older,” he added as one providing encouragement and a convenient standard of comparison.

“James Roach,” repeated Owen, “who’s he?”

“Hers,” answered Michael, and Owen gave up the struggle. “Perhaps we had better go,” said he, “where does she live?” And for the second time that day he followed Michael Dwyer.

Again they passed the neglected entrance to The McCormac’s enchanted castle and saw, in the green jungle beyond, the red frocks of two tiny children, and caught an echo of their chatter.

Almost half a mile further on Michael Dwyer drew in. Again they were at the entrance to an estate, but here a great rusty gate still sagged between its limestone pillars and barred out the would-be intruder. As far as eye could reach—to the turn of the road in both directions—a high stone wall frowned down upon the passerby, with no other break in its austerity save a flat green door near the disused gate.

Michael Dwyer suspended himself from the latch

## ROSNAH

of this door until it yielded to him, with a sulky suddenness which dropped him on the threshold quite content to stay there, while Owen fared on alone. He found himself in the garden of what had once been the lodge. The place was scrupulously neat, the twinkling many-paned windows of the little house were curtained with fresh muslin. The flower beds were planted and outlined with a geometrical exactitude. A climbing rose and a honeysuckle were trained over the little porch, flowering shrubs grew close around the face of the wall; and little paths of orange colored gravel separated the flower beds from one another and from the tiny lawn in the centre. 'Twas a brave little house in a brave little garden, but not all its air of refinement and of daintiness could create any illusion of prosperity.

An ancient, an incredibly ancient, serving man was weeding a bed of pansies, and of him Owen made the proper inquiries. James Roach, he inferred. Surely he seemed older than anyone else could be.

"You'll find Miss Judy in the drawing room, sir," he imparted, with only the softest trace of an accent in his speech. "You will not mind going up unannounced, I hope, sir. These pansies must be done before I get the dinner."

As Owen went up the narrow walk between the marshalled bachelor-buttons, lobelia and balsams, the door opened and his hostess came to greet him. Such



## ROSNAH

a gentle face he had never seen ; such a young face never had been shaded by such soft white hair ; such a tender dignity had never animated so frail a body.

"You are Mr. Owen Fitzgerald?" she asked, smiling up at him when he stood beside her.

"I am," he answered, reflecting her smile and marvelling at her perfect voice.

"Micky's young gentleman," she went on, "of whom one hears so many kind and pleasant things. Ah, but one does," she insisted as he began a deprecatory remark. "We are bankrupt of much in this sad land, but we still have great store of gratitude. Shall we sit here? You find the air agreeable?"

Owen gladly agreed, and she placed herself opposite upon one of the seats which edged the minute porch. Then after a short silence, filled by the droning of bees in the honeysuckle around them, Miss Judy raised her beautiful, clear eyes to Owen's, and said simply :

"I asked you to come so that I might hear something of my dear friend, The McCormac. Ah, yes," she smiled at his astonishment, "we all know that you saw him this morning. And I want you to tell me quite frankly your opinion of him. Is he well? Is he happy? Is he cherished and cared for? Does he grieve for anything or anyone? Believe me, Mr. Fitzgerald, it is no idle curiosity which prompts me to ask these questions."

## ROSNAH

As she ended her appeal a slow blush crept up her cheek and her patient eyes filled. She drew out her handkerchief and wept a little as frankly as a child might weep, and Owen instantly guessed the truth. This was the something dearer than country and fame which The McCormac had renounced. So he told her all he knew, all he had seen, all he had heard, and she listened as though he had brought her tidings straight from Heaven. Her face was at once so wistful and so shy, so glad and so envious, that when the time for parting came, he said:

"Mr. McCormac has promised to send for me again. May I hope that, if he should, you will let me come back to this delightful garden and tell you all about it?"

"Oh, if you would," she cried, "if you only, only would! The time has seemed so very long. It is a great many years since we have had such direct and intelligent news of our friend. The children volunteer so little and one can ask them nothing lest he should come to hear. You understand, I hope."

"I think I do. I hope I do," he answered.

"And to understand—" her brave voice faltered for a moment.

"Is to admire," he amended, "and to envy."

"You see that you are proving the truth of the village gossip," she smiled at him. "They told me you were kind."

## ROSNAH

"And I shall prove to you that I am selfish. It will be a pleasure to come to this quiet, dear place to tell you about your friend, who is now my friend. Perhaps sometime you will call upon my mother. I think you would like my mother, Miss McMahon. She is really very charming."

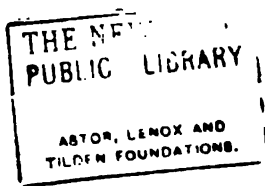
"Of that I am assured," she answered prettily, as he made his adieu, and found the faithful Michael Dwyer still upon the threshold of the flat green door.

## XXIX

**I**N THE general squalor and dejection of the little village of Step-Aside Moira Keegan's cottage shone almost artificial in its cleanliness and thrift. She lived in it quite alone, but safe, for she was protected by the love and loyalty of every heart in the country side. These safeguards were hers partly by inheritance and partly by her own winning. Her father, "the ould Dochter," had left a memory which no upstart, gig-driving, microbe-preaching successor could dim; and even during her father's life Moira had attended such simple cases and dressings as might be intrusted to her. It was one of the tenets of the villagers that "any ould sup in the heel of a bottle that you had left since the ould Dochter's day would do you more good than that



"It was only she who could persuade the old men and women to submit . . . to her father's despised successor."



## ROSNAH

young fool of a new one could with all his big words and his wise looks." There were even rumors of cure affected by an empty bottle of Dr. Keegan's prescribing in cases where Dr. O'Connor had exerted his poor skill in vain.

"'Tis aisy known he's but a 'prentice at the wurrk," the village would disparagingly remark. "Sure the smell o' the ould Dochter's bottles was strong enough to knock ye down, let alone the taste. An' this gossoon 'd give ye a bottle that a child would drink if you'd let it. Or maybe a little pill with no more taste than a sweetie! What good could brash like that do a body?"

After the death of her father Moira had taken up her abode in one of the village cabins and it became straightway the shrine to which the village turned in sickness, in sorrow, and in joy. "Herself" was the village deity, but Moira was its Patron Saint. It was she who wrote its letters to sons and daughters in America. It was she who read aloud the answers and such newspapers as found their way to that backwater of civilization. It was she who was God-mother to its babies. It was she who took care of the altar for Father Dan and it was only she who could persuade the old men and women to submit their bronchitis and their rheumatism to her father's despised successor. It was she who, quite without any such intention, set an example of industry which no one

## ROSNAH

ever thought of following. From the earliest sunshine she was busy among her patients, her pensioners or her flowers; and every moment she could spare from these occupations she spent in weaving the exquisite lace whose sale to a Dublin draper was her principal means of subsistence.

And to Moira, working one morning in her little garden, there came a marvellous creature, half man, half boy, half poet and half seer. A creature all on fire to serve his country and his fellowmen, who in that year of our Lord 1880, had set out to obey their command: "Bear ye one another's burdens." A very Peter the Hermit in the zeal which burned in his pale, young face and in the depths of his wonderful eyes. He talked of marvels of well doing and straightway they were done. He devised and managed destinies like a God and he dedicated his wealth, his charity, and his time to Moira's work in Step-Aside.

Owen was for some time the only member of the Fitzgerald family with whom she came in contact. But, in common with all the village, she often saw the others as they rode and drove and walked about the roads. And each one of such casual glimpses made her more shrinkingly aware of the depth and breadth of the gulf which separated her in education, habit, ideals and manner from the world to which Owen belonged.

## ROSNAH

It was, naturally, Rosnah who most often awakened this feeling. A meeting with the beautiful and patrician Lady Rosnah was always an ordeal to Moira. Very loudly then did "different, different," ring in her ears as she glanced down at her own coarse shoes and skirt and contrasted them with Rosnah's dainty perfection of detail.

And yet there were points of similarity between the two girls. Both were of the blue-eyed, fair-skinned type, though Rosnah's hair was copper colored and Moira's was so black that even the sunshine could find no hint of gold or brown in its heavy waves, and could only awaken in it lustrous gleams of blue or steel. They both carried themselves with the grace of perfect health, the voices of both were low and gentle, though their accents were very different, for Moira spoke with a tired, almost plaintive intonation, and Rosnah with a certain crispness and authority of word and phrase. There was a slight darkness under Rosnah's eyes, but Moira's were so deeply shadowed, and fringed with such black and curled lashes as to give the impression of extreme delicacy or many nights of weeping. And yet the shadows resulted from neither of these causes, but from a habit, popular among the ancients of Step-Aside, of giving up, in the dim hours of night, all hope of life and of sending distraught relatives to beg that Miss Moira would "come to see the last of them."



## ROSNAH

In the absence of "Herself" Moira was ruler of Step-Aside. She had more power over the servants of Avonmere than any Fitzgerald among them all, and it was by virtue of her will that Owen's least desire was sufficient to overthrow the General's most heavily emphasized commands. The tinkle of Mr. Owen's bell produced a stampede in the servant's hall; every foot leaped to obey it and every voice outshripped the other in claiming the right to answer. And, as was frequent of late, when he breakfasted in bed, the stairs swarmed with bearers of "tasty bits" to tempt his appetite, while the rest of the family, marooned in the breakfast-room, foraged as best they might among the dish covers upon the sideboard.

With the outdoor servants the case was the same. An arid strawberry bed could be made to produce a cabbage leaf full of ripe fruit for Mr. Owen. There was always a mount for him, even if Peter Carey had but just reported every one of his charges incapable of "so much as puttin' one foot before the other if you was to offer him the wealth of the world."

At first these services of love were due to Moira's desire, but very soon the gentle, handsome, melancholy boy had won the affection and the confidence of the entire staff by his interest in their affairs and relatives and by his uniform consideration. As Katy-parlor-maid was wont to remark: "Sure he's no more



"A marvellous creature, half man, half boy, half poet, and half seer."

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## ROSTNAH

trouble in the house than a fly. An' he's that ghastly sometimes in the face that you'd be expecting him to die any minute. You would that. Glory be to God, I hope it's not the beginnin' end of a decline he has!"

### XXX

**I**T WAS with a sense of great relief and comfort that Desmond Fitzgerald, in his pleasant home near Hyde Park, found himself once more the sun and centre about which a household revolved. It was not a large establishment, but it was as decorous, as correct, as calm as he. And it was his. Here were no uncouth servants, no storming General with his foolish assumption of authority, no obnoxious Gerald with his insulting familiarity, no boisterous Lawrence with his admiration of his elder brother's superior knowledge except of such important topics as the winner of last year's Derby and the age at which a bull pup's tail and ears should be cut. Even Owen had been a trial. Heroes and fanatics were all very well—great movements needed them; history made much of them, but it would be confoundedly awkward for Desmond if Owen should do something mad and treasonable and get himself hanged or transported. Lady Mary he considered rather non-

## ROSNAH

assertive, but no more so than was desirable and proper in a woman. The mythical future Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald, though her face and figure varied as his fancies changed, always possessed this characteristic to a marked degree. Lady Mary was also admiring—another suitable trait—and eminently presentable.

And Sheila! When he remembered the sort of sisters which fell to the lot of other fellows—nice enough fellows, too—he congratulated himself heartily on Sheila. She had some faults, he admitted, but none which could not be corrected by a little advice on his part and a little effort on hers. Her weakness about that young Lord Kevin Creighton was regrettable; so was her feeling for Lovell. Desmond had been seriously disquieted to observe that despite his warning Rosnah had continued to treat the tutor with the sweet graciousness she showed to everyone else. He would allow it to continue, he told himself, until he should terminate his visit to Ireland. He would then bring her back with him to London, and in the dignity of being the lady paramount in his house, she would soon outgrow this childish mannerism.

In his decorous drawing room after dinner he fell to imagining what life would be when Sheila was waiting for him. How different even work would be with Sheila keen and ready to hear all about his

## ROSTON

cases; interested in them; seeing his ability in his profession and the position he had won for himself in the exacting world of London society. He had been often conscious of a curious resentment at Avonmere when the more spectacular accomplishments of the other men—Gerald's painting, Lawrence's horsecraft, the General's medals—were before Roston's eyes and he had nothing to show. He could not forever carry newspapers and legal records about with him. Even if he could, he assured himself, he would not stoop to such means of winning favor. And yet she had favored him. There was no doubt of that. She had confided in him. She had accepted his warnings, his advice, his sympathy. In fact the only suggestion of his which she had not adopted with a pretty deference was that upon which he was most determined: London.

But Desmond was quite confident that he could one day persuade her to share his home. The idea had originated in Adelaide Lytton's careless suggestion on that first morning in the Dower House garden, and it had shown an amazing persistency. The ministrations of his housekeeper failed, for the first time in ten years, to satisfy him. Mrs. Tripet was as faithful, capable and devoted as it was possible for a working housekeeper to be. His wishes were her laws; his whims her pleasure. An enthusiastic acceptance of his extremely good opinion of him-

## ROSNAH

self was one of her qualifications for office. Another was her husband, who acted as butler and valet, and excelled in both capacities. A housemaid and a kitchen maid—frequently renewed—completed the staff of his hitherto perfectly satisfactory setting. But to-night he missed something. After a cigar and a contemplative hour before the drawing room fire he admitted to himself that he missed Sheila. How brightly she would glow against the dim greenness of the walls; how prettily her youthful laughter would sound through the quiet house. That bright copper colored head of hers would look well, bending over a big book in the library or resting against the cushions of the chair opposite his own.

His imaginings had carried him to this scene of quiet domesticity when it occurred to him that the cushions in question were not worthy of so precious and glittering a burden. He called for lamps and candles; then for more lamps and more candles; and surveyed his drawing room. Ten years ago the house had been furnished by a fashionable upholsterer, and Desmond had trusted to his assurance that it was correct in every particular. The hand of Time, and of Mrs. Trippit,—to say nothing of the serial parlor maids—had dealt gently with the work of the fashionable upholsterer, and Desmond had rested contentedly in the knowledge that his walls, his carpets and his furniture were unimpeachable. Even when

## ROSNAH

he suggested to Rosnah that the house could be renovated he had felt confident that she would be overwhelmed by them and would refuse to countenance any change. But now, viewed in the light of her coming and in the glare of many lamps the drawing room had a faded, lacklustre air.

"Mrs. Trippit," said he pompously, "this place lacks life. Why are there no flowers about? And no—er—dogs," he added, remembering Rosnah's following of pets.

"Well, to be sure, sir!" gasped Mrs. Trippit. "In all the years I've done for you I never knew a dog to be desired. Flowers, of course, we has for dinners. But dogs, sir, has never been included in your wants."

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," Desmond agreed. "I may not have mentioned it, but I *should* like to see a dog and a flower occasionally. Will you come to the dining room now? Bring all the lights. I want to see the room," and the procession formed. Mr. Trippit led the way down the winding stairs with a student's lamp. Desmond came next, and after him followed the women servants. Even the kitchen-maid had been pressed into service as torch bearer, and carried her candles with grinning bashfulness. Last came Mrs. Trippit in her white stockings and strapped shoes, her respectable stuff gown and her impregnable cap with its wreath of ossified Brussels



## ROSNAH

sprouts. She bore a candle, but her mind was busy with other things and the parlor maid received some of the wax upon her protesting shoulders, for:

"Flowers and dogs!" marvelled Mrs. Trippit, "he'd like to see occasionally! The flowers is easy to arrange for, but where, I wonder, will the dogs be on the occasions when he's not seeing them."

Meanwhile Desmond was deciding that the dining room was not so bad. That its high-backed chairs and its heavy sideboard would throw a slim young figure into admirable relief and that the dim blue hangings would gently echo the brighter blue of his sister's eyes.

Up to the bed rooms the procession moved and there Desmond found much to alter and to remedy. An apartment which had done excellently well for a visiting college friend, or a benighted traveller through London would not do at all for Sheila. His last decision before he fell asleep was that she should have his room as a boudoir and one of the other rooms, remodelled and refurnished as her sleeping room. By knocking down a wall here and cutting a door through there, a dressing room could be contrived, and it is probable that in all his thirty-five years, Desmond Fitzgerald had never given as much thought to the comfort of his kind as he now devoted to the planning of suitable accommodation for Rosnah. On the following morning he sent for the up-

## ROSNAH

holsterer, who now decried his own work as energetically as he had once praised it. The aesthetic cult had lately overwhelmed the drawing rooms of the aristocracy; and Desmond was deluged with color schemes in anaemic greens and blues. He was commanded to choose between a dirty yellow much favored by Countesses, and a blotchy drab without which six Duchesses would have died. And Desmond giving the address of Avonmere, had referred everything to Rosnah who received samples and suggestions with a consternation by no means relieved by Desmond's explanatory letter, asking her aid and interest "in these necessary changes in the house where I hope to persuade you to spend many happy years."

But Rosnah's consternation was as nothing in comparison to that of Mrs. Trippit's. After ten unchanging years her master had altered almost beyond recognition in five weeks. He began to play with careful and mechanical precision upon the piano, which had scarcely been touched between one tuning and another. He, like his father, visited his tailor and actually asked Mrs. Trippit's opinion of shepherds' plaids and tweed mixtures. He, her Mr. Fitzgerald, who had never worn anything more jocund than the black broadcloth of propriety and the "pepper and salt" of utility!

"Depend upon it, Marmaduke," said Mrs. Trippit darkly to her spouse, "this has but one meaning."

## ROSNAH

"Meaning matrimony?" he asked pausing, with suspended chamois and studying his own uneasy countenance in the coffee-pot he was polishing. The coffee-pot was tall and thin and its shining side reflected so elongated and lugubrious a version of Marmaduke's correct physiognomy that it quite depressed him.

"Maybe you're right," he went on. "Things does look dark and strangely to be sure. But two or three times before they 'as 'ad that look, and nothing came to pass. You may be wrong. I 'opes as 'ow you are."

"Never before did things go to the length of clothes like a draught board and the 'ouse pulled topsy turvy. No, no, Marmaduke," cried Mrs. Trip-pit with a mournful shake of the Brussels' sprouts. "A Hirish girl is doing this. 'E's going back there at the end of the week. We'll be taking our orders from a Hirish 'ussey before the year is out."

## XXXI

**D**Y DEAR LAWRENCE," began the Duchess of Clontarf as Lawrence stretched himself on a rug at her side and endeavored to train one eye upon his pretty hostess while the other was glued to the box-hedged path from which his pretty hostess'

## ROSNAH

pretty sister might be expected shortly to emerge, "you are the very person I want to see."

"Dear madam, you do me too much honor."

"I am beginning to fear," she went on, "that things are not quite as they should be at Avonmere."

"Of course they're not," he heartily agreed with her. "How could they be when all our hearts is broke by the cruel Sassanachs at the Dower House?"

"Be serious," she laughed.

"Bedad, it's most serious I am. The most serious of the lot of them, though there's others I could name in a very bad way."

"If you can't talk sensibly," she unsympathetically retorted, "you can at least preserve a respectful silence while I do. And this is a really serious matter. I hear that your father is being 'watched,' as the country people say."

"Watched?"

"Yes. I hear that he has been seen talking to Cooper, agent to Lord Andover, and the most hated man in all the district. Cooper has committed more acts of wanton cruelty than would have disgraced a Borgia."

"I heard it a day or so back," Lawrence admitted. "Someone spoke of it to Owen, and he told me. Ah, here's Miss Adelaide!" And no one seeing the expression of his face as he watched his lady-love's ap-

## ROSNAH

proach could have doubted that Miss Lytton had disobeyed her sister.

"You are to sit down quietly and listen," warned Her Grace when Adelaide showed a desire to appropriate the conversation. "Mr. Fitzgerald and I are talking about very serious things. Go on, if you please, Mr. Fitzgerald, Adelaide knows all I know."

"I was saying," Lawrence obeyed, "that Owen was telling me a day or so back about Old Stormalong and the brute being seen together."

"Old Stormalong?" cried Her Grace—

"The General, the Governor," explained Adelaide. "'Tis a pet name invented by Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I congratulate you," the elder sister laughed. "It is so wonderfully descriptive. 'Your father!' she paraphrased, 'methinks I see your father.'"

"Oh! where, my lady?" capped Lawrence in English pure and sweet. He had a trick of thus rendering his quotations, and this, together with the wide range of his authorities, was one of the characteristics which claimed Adelaide's interest.

"I'll tell you what I know about it all," he now went on. "It seems this Cooper fellow has a brother of a sister-in-law of his that was once in Old Stormalong's regiment. So what does the Governor do but strike up an acquaintance with the brute on the strength of it. And the more he's warned and reasoned with the more he sticks to it. You might as

## ROSNAH

well be talking to the waves of the sea—and it blowing a big wind at the time—as to him.”

“Have you tried?” queried Adelaide.

“I have. And my Governor pleasantly said that in affairs relating to the stables he was willing to acknowledge my ‘recondite learning’; those were his very words; that he was grateful and ever would be for my attention to Captain— I give you my word that he values that old horse of his more than he does the whole of the rest of us, except Sheila. And I think maybe he’s in the right. Did you ever hear his description of his sons? I found the Lady Mother nearly crying about it. ‘A prig, a fop, a boor and a fool’ is what he calls us. To her, you know—to the Lady Mother—we are all paragons. But about Captain he is nearly human. He was in a terrible way when the old fellow picked up a nail and he stood about like a fussy old hen when I was taking it out. He spent the next three days fighting with the grooms about poultices: three good boys left on the head of it. So when I said my say about Cooper he turns on me with this: ‘Your knowledge of *horses* is undoubted,’ he sneers in his nasty way. You know it?”

“I’ve seen it,” the Duchess agreed. “I wonder no one ever killed him for it.”

“Perhaps they will,” Adelaide suggested hopefully. “He’s not in India now.”

## ROSNAH

"But does the General quite understand the situation?" queried her little Grace anxiously. "It will surely mean an outbreak of some sort and almost as surely it will mean a boycott. Cooper has been boycotted for months. Only an old habit of fear of him prevents his murder. And you know the rule: To hold any intercourse with a boycotted man is to court boycott on one's own account. Does your father know this?"

"If he doesn't it's not for the want of being told," Lawrence assured her. "He's been warned times without number, we're beginning to find out. But it all has no effect. My father is certainly a dear old gentleman."

"I think he is," Adelaide agreed, "and I can think of nothing more exciting than a boycott."

"Child," cried the Duchess, "you don't know what you're saying. It is a terrible thing. A thing of violence and crime and hard revenge."

"It is not at all," answered the sophisticated Miss Lytton. "Mary Worthington was staying with the McCarthys in Tipperary last year when they were boycotted. And the officers of the regiment stationed there at the time, took the greatest care of them. Mary is going to marry the subaltern when he gets his 'step.' She tells me she never paid so altogether delightful a visit."

## ROснаH

### XXXII

**I**T SOON grew to be an accepted principle among the servants that Lady Mary was not to be disturbed or "frustrated," and that in cases of need or emergency Owen was the one to be appealed to, or, failing him, Rosnah. They were a nervous crew, these servants, much subject to alarms, and as the time went by Rosnah learned to obey their furtive or open appeals for help with not too much anxiety. For the troubles she was called upon to deal with were rarely more serious than a fit of hysterics induced by some remark of the General's or a burst of wild weeping caused by the breakage of glass and china.

She was, therefore, not overwhelmed when, one evening as she, Gerald and Lady Mary, were enjoying the late twilight, Tim O'Connell—that Mercury in livery—approached the summer house, and whispered in a stage aside:

"Miss Sheila, for the love of Heaven, Miss Sheila, will you step down into the kitchen?"

"What is it, Tim?" she asked as she followed him. "What have you broken now? You really must learn to be more careful."

"It's not meself at all, miss," answered Tim, "but will you come around and talk to Old John, he's having one of his tanthrums and there's not one of us



## ROSNAH

can do anything with him. Mr. Owen is away—worse luck—and we are in dread the General will hear him and come down. John will kill him dead if he does. 'Tis wild he is when he's like this. You can hear him over here, miss, if you stop." They were by this time in a little shrubbery which screened the backward portions of the house, and, naturally Rosnah stopped.

"That's him now, miss," cried Mercury, "Glory be to God! He'll have the General down." And from the open windows of the servants' quarters there came the rise and fall of a man's voice in clear wailing cadence. It blasted the sweet quiet of the evening, and Rosnah shook as if with cold when she heard it. Tim, emotional, peasant-bred Tim, began to wail in sympathy and horror, and Rosnah found herself almost whimpering with hurry and fright, as she pressed on.

In the servants' hall the large table was bare. The chairs were pushed back to the walls and in a frightened group at the further end of the room the staff of indoor servants were huddled; all except Old John. He was walking around and around the table offering an imaginary dish to imaginary guests, and as he went he wailed:

"Soup, entree, fish—dear God in Heaven—joint, vegetables, game—Lord help us! Lord help us! Wine, sweets, fruit—O Lord! O Lord! Every night

## ROSTNAH

the same, every night the waste—'no thank you, John, I have too much.' O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!' From time to time he paused and raised his trembling hands above his head, but he met every effort at condolence on the part of the other servants with a wild, blank stare, and limped on his round again. "Soup, entree, fish—dear God in Heaven—joint, vegetables, game—Lord help us! Lord help us!"

Rosnah crossed to his side and put her hand upon his arm.

"John," she urged, "dear John," but he seemed to recognize her as little as he did the others, and she moved back to Mrs. O'Leary's side. "What is it?" she asked, "what is the matter with him? Don't you think we ought to send for somebody?"

"Peter Carey's gone for the only one that can do anything with him," answered the housekeeper. "All we can do is to watch him and see that he doesn't harm himself. He'll change in a minute now, miss—God help the poor man! God pity him!" And presently, though the rise and fall of Old John's wailing was unaltered, the words changed.

"'She wants wine,' said Doctor Keegan—O God! O God!—'Give her soup,' says Doctor Keegan—O God! O God, be good to us! 'It's food she wants,' says Doctor Keegan. 'Food,' and the place was bare. 'Give her meat,' says Doctor Keegan, 'feed her or she'll die. Keep up her strength,' says Doctor

## ROSNAH

"You may," he answered, "and more than that, you may walk back to the village with us when she has comforted poor Old John."

### XXXIII

LADY MARY had hoped that the passing days would lead the General to soften and alter any unfavorable impression which the ordeal of that first trying evening might have created and she chose a gently smiling morning to express her satisfaction and to elicit some evidence of his.

"Yes, my dear, yes," he admitted somewhat grudgingly. "I feel that I am upon the whole, to be congratulated."

They were taking their usual little morning constitutional through the gardens. She looked very young and unworldly in the wide garden hat and the pretty liliac muslin which Rosnah had insisted upon ordering for her and her smile was very happy as she made soft answer:

"I am glad, dear, that you are satisfied."

"Hardly that, Mary, hardly that," he corrected. "There are several things which I could wish to have altered. For instance: Gerald's unbearable French manner and speech. Burn my body, the fop speaks English with a foreign accent."

## ROSTNAH

"He has spent all his life in Paris," the mother pointed out. "We must make allowances, dear Desmond."

"Then there's Lawrence's lamentable likeness to your Uncle Peter, my love. Fortunately he is the only one of them who shows it and we could hardly expect a face like your Uncle Peter's—the very image of a horse—to pass away and leave no trace upon the succeeding generation. And the fellow's tastes are so extraordinary. He prefers the stable to the drawing room. He never has a word to say to me and he and that disreputable Carey are as thick as thieves and Cagney will soon be useless to me if he devotes so much of his time to Lawrence's boots. But you remember how I prepared you for some such disappointment, my love?"

Lady Mary smiled. She did indeed remember how throughout the long, long voyage home from India her husband had systematically discouraged all the high hopes with which she had looked forward to meeting her children.

"But you are pleased with Sheila?" she asked now. "You liked her so much when you first saw her. Indeed we all fell in love with her. And Desmond? And Owen? I was quite overcome to find my little sons grown to such fine young men."

"Mother dear," cried a young voice within the big hall behind them. "O mother, will you come down

## ROSNAH

to the South Gate with me? They tell me there's a whole field of cowslips blossomed since yesterday."

"Indeed, I shall, Owen, very gladly. I've not seen a cowslip since I was a little girl," Lady Mary answered. "And you, dear,"—she turned to the man who was chief object of her care and love—"you won't want me for half an hour or so? It is all so perfect. You safe from bullets and fever and all those dangers which were always frightening me. And then the children. And this dear old place. Everything perfect! Everything peaceful. And you won't be alone. I see Gerald coming across the lawn."

Again the voice of her youngest born summoned her and with a wistful little smile she vanished into the hall.

"Peaceful!" commented Gerald with a shrug. "You must have been at a lively station, sir, if my mother calls this peace. These blackguards of 'Land Leaguers' or 'Young Irishmen' or whatever they call themselves, murdered another landlord last night. Several of the men in your position have appealed for police protection and never stir out without a pair of constables."

"Cowards!" cried the General. "And look here, Gerald, you're to say nothing of all this to your mother. She enjoys peace and she's entitled to it."

## ROSNAH

And by Gad, sir, she'll have it if I have to shoot every devil of a peasant for miles around."

"You'll hardly secure it in any other way," said Gerald with a yawn. "And you may count on my assistance if it would be of any use to you."

Lady Mary had gallantly tried to bring about an understanding between Gerald and his father. Rosnah had cleverly seconded her efforts. But the General's dislike and distrust of all things Gallic was not easy to eradicate. In fact none of his ideas was open to change and none of his convictions was founded upon or influenced by reason. Years ago he had known a Frenchman. The Frenchman had turned out badly and General Fitzgerald had thereupon formed his opinion of all Frenchmen.

He could be, upon occasion, agreeable with his other sons; he was always agreeable with his daughter, but with Gerald he was uniformly overbearing and contemptuous. And Gerald, in the pleasant companionship of Rosnah and Lady Mary, troubled himself not at all as to the attitude of his father. He adopted, as his own, two rooms at the extreme northern end of the house. They looked pleasantly out upon the terrace and he soon reduced them to a state which scandalized Lady Mary and the housekeeper. And there, surrounded by casts and old armor, obsolete weapons and half finished sketches he dabbled, much as though he had been still in Paris, with paint

## ROSNAH

or clay or pencil. His proficiency astonished his mother and disgusted his father. When Lady Mary discovered that he could also play a little, sing a little, fiddle a little, and that a little comedy of his had seen the footlights, she was delighted with her paragon. And when she began to play long forgotten duets with him; when his skillful accompaniments supported her tender voice through quaint old songs; when her laugh rang gaily with his; when he caught the sweet pure line of her profile in a sketch of such fidelity that no one could fail to recognize it as her portrait, and of such beauty that no one could fail to see the touch of genius in it; then the General grew restless. He was not proud of his son; he was jealous of him. And he made no pretense. He had been frankly disagreeable; distrustful; sneering.

The day whose morning had brought the cowslips was a quiet one at Avonmere. Owen and Lawrence took train for Dublin in the afternoon to dine and spend the night; Owen to attend some political demonstration and Lawrence to take care of him. Desmond was still in London. The General and Lady Mary sallied forth upon a round of neighborly visits. Gerald strolled off with his sketching things and a white umbrella, and Rosnah was left to her own devices. She had written a long letter to Glencora urging the young people there to do nothing rash and

## ROSNAH

admitting that she had not yet found an auspicious moment for explaining the situation to the General, "who really," she wrote, "is not an easy person to reason with." She had herself consigned this letter to the post-bag lest its inscription to Lord Kevin might cause surprise and was busy with dresses and Ameera when that *rara avis*, Tim O'Connell, bespoke her attention by politely pounding on the door. He had not yet conquered the queer hot feeling which seized him whenever he saw her and he was miserably conscious that he never wandered so far from grammar and from form as he did when speaking to her. She had learned with heavenly condescension the words and the tune of *The Wearing of the Green* and she sang it with a pretty feeling and emphasis. Also she had mastered *The Boys of Wexford* and *God Save Ireland*, and Tim would gladly have laid down his life to serve or please her.

"Miss Sheila," he now announced, in the momentary absence of Old John, "you're wanted below in the hall."

"Who is it, Tim?" she asked.

"Well, I didn't rightly catch their names, miss, but these is their tickets," and he presented three cards—one bearing a ducal coronet and one not over clean. Under the coronet she read: "Christopher Georges Aime Phillippe, duc de Brideau." The soiled



## ROSNAH

card was inscribed: "Maxence de Tournelle," and the third announced: "Marie Anne Joseph Desroches."

"Did they ask for me?" Rosnah questioned.

"Not in so many words, miss, but that's their meanin'—if they have any at all. 'Tis some outlandish sort of ould talk they have. Rooshan or Prooshan, I'd call it. Everyone is out but yourself. Will ye come and see can ye find what they're lookin' for?"

The girl hurried to the hall and as her muslin and ribbons began to flutter and float down the dark old stairs three figures started into wonderful bows and gesticulations of pleasure. Rosnah advanced upon them with her frank air of cordiality, but before she found opportunity to avow her knowledge of their language she had received many opinions in fervent French upon the potency of her charms. She made the strangers welcome and threw them into fresh transports by the softness of her accent and the pretty stiltedness of her phraseology. They had dared to intrude, they informed her, on account of their "*cher Gerald*," whose absence they could no longer endure nor understand. They distrusted this so turvy-turtle country. But having seen Mademoiselle, they no longer wondered. Oh, no! All was now understood! The so beautiful city of his adoption would see him no more. They were heart-pierced—desolated—but they understood. It was not the

## ROSNAH

turvy-turtle that held him prisoner. They understood! But yes, they even envied. Their leader and spokesman ducked, clicked his high heels together, pressed his little hat and his curled walking stick to his florid waistcoat, kissed his yellow gloved hand to Rosnah and bowed until the buttons on the back of his coat twinkled brightly at her. And might he now, he begged, present himself to the so charming sister of his so dear friend? He was Maxence de Tournelles. If Mademoiselle had been to Paris—Rosnah shook her head—ah! it was a thousand pities. But when she should visit Paris with the brave Gerald she should find the name not quite unknown there. Oh, no, not quite! There was a picture shop in the Boulevard des Capucines—where she could assure herself of that. And his two companions bowing in the background and wafting ecstatic kisses towards the ceiling were too loyal to hint that almost any pawnshop in the *Quartier Latin* would serve quite as well.

These comrades he next presented. The Duc de Brideau, whose greatest talent was for friendship, and Marie Anne Joseph Desroches, whose plays were at that very moment shaking the Academy to its foundations. Corneille was dead. Racine was no more. Molière was but a name. Yes—yes! So the world thought. But the world was wrong—as always. Cornielle, Racine, Molière, Power, Knowl-

## ROSNAH

edge, Wit, were all reincarnate in Marie Anne Joseph. Yes, there the dramatic genius of all France—Past; Present; Future; was concealed.

Rosnah smiled her delight at these tidings and reflected that the concealment was perfect. The wisest explorer would never have guessed that the long fair hair, the blue eyes, the pinched waist and the high heels before her clothed the dramatic genius of all France. His clothes were even more wonderful than Gerald's; his manner more elaborate than M. de Tournelle's; his hat and hair more polished; his gloves and boots more tight, his trousers and collar more loose than those of the talented Duke. Rosnah led the way to the drawing room and sent Tim, who had been mutely transfixed upon the stairs, in search of Gerald. He was presently descried returning with not only that disgruntled fisherman, but with the General as well. "Cross Fitzgerald's" social instincts had that day failed him, while Lady Mary's were still carrying her up strange door steps. He had deserted and walked home. So Tim had found him with Gerald on the avenue and to them he had made the announcement:

"You're wanted up at the house. There's three strange men in it and Miss Sheila sent me to call you; Lady Mary's out."

Gerald and his father dashed to the rescue; and the General, for all his years, outdistanced his less

## ROSNAH

athletic son and reached Rosnah's side while Gerald was still upon the stairs. With fierce eyeglass, quick steps and soldierly bearing he advanced upon the group, and as he neared it the voice of his "sweet child" fell upon his ear in words which he did not understand! The men with her laughed, and Rosnah turned to him smiling! actually smiling!

"Papa—" she began, and immediately three faces vanished and the neatly brushed crowns of three pomaded heads were presented to view.

"What's the meaning of this?" the General demanded, and immediately the faces reappeared and six yellow-gloved hands, three shining hats and three curly walking sticks were stretched forth to embrace him. He was very near the edge of apoplexy when Gerald entered and the welcoming battery was turned to him. The Duc rushed forward and took Gerald to his bosom; playing triumphant tattoos the while with hat and stick upon his back. The Dramatic Genius of France and Maxence de Tournelles followed suit and Gerald was no less demonstrative. They embraced one another, pressing cheek to cheek and kissing ear or hair or whisker, as chance would have it. "Cross Fitzgerald" watched them for a moment, then turned to Rosnah.

"Come with me, madam," he commanded in the voice with which he had twice turned a broken regi-

## ROSNAH

ment back to the front. She obeyed, surprised, and in the hall he spoke again:

"Go to your room, miss," said he in the same tone of badly suppressed fury. But this was no panic-stricken rout of men trained to obedience. This was a girl accustomed to issue commands rather than to receive them. A girl in a cool muslin dress with cool eyes and a cool voice in which she now made answer:

"Thank you, I can't. I shall be wanted to assist in entertaining these friends of Gerald's. What a pity it is that you don't speak French, papa!"

With these amazing words she returned to the drawing room vouchsafing, as she closed the door:

"They will stay to dinner, but they have an appointment in Dublin for the evening."

## XXXIV

**W** O THE guests and the servants that dinner was much as other dinners, except for the appetites with which the visitors did justice to its several courses. No one looking at the General would know that he was yearning for the days of the Borgias when the art of poisoning guests was in its prime. The conversation was as general as the circumstances allowed, and "Cross Fitzgerald," under the benign influence of Burgundy, unbent sufficiently

## ROSNAH

to give M. de Desroches a lesson in English pronunciation:

"We say Miss—not Mees," he boomed. "Miss Fitzgerald: so:—Miss Sheila Fitzgerald."

The genius tried and failed. It was not possible, that name, he explained with shrugging shoulders. But the face of Mademoiselle, the so beautiful visage—

"Teach him mamma's name," Rosnah interrupted; fearing that some inkling of his pupil's gallantry might reach her father.

"My wife's name," the General informed the eager learner, "is Mary, Lady Mary Fitzgerald. Mary, Ma-ry—can you say that?"

"Ah, Marie!" cried the eager learner, all smiles and triumph. "*Mon nom c'est Marie*," and he with much emphasis and gesticulation forced the General to understand his meaning. "*Mon nom c'est Marie Anne Joseph Desroches*."

If he had announced himself in the enjoyment of small-pox or the plague or leprosy he could not have produced a greater effect. The General turned a purple face upon him, noted the fair hair, the small hands, the pinched waist. He might have guessed it, he fumed. He had heard enough of the manners of France to have been prepared. And the creature had spoken to Sheila, to his peerless Sheila, was, even now, speaking to her in the polluted language of that

## ROSNAH

polluted land; was sitting at his table; had kissed his wife's hand. The purple flush which was his normal complexion, grew so much darker that Lady Mary half rose to go to him, but he favored her with the glare which had always meant: "invent some excuse for leaving the room and go at once," and with a new and fiercer glare which the poor flustered lady interpreted to mean: "and take your daughter with you."

She obeyed with some murmured apology about her headache being unendurable and with a very real gratitude for Rosnah's proffered ministrations. The General stood at the door as they passed out and then beckoned to Gerald with a sharp movement of the head. The proceeding lost some of its strangeness because the meal was nearly over and the Frenchmen wandered to the windows while Gerald joined his father in the hall.

"I want a word with you, sir," said the General when Tim O'Connell had closed the door. "Come to the gun room."

Once in that safe retreat he cast restraint to the winds. He would have throttled Gerald if the consideration of their relative heights had not controlled him. But no blow could have been more offensive than his command:

"Remove those — persons instantly from my house."

## ROSNAH

Gerald flushed, but he forced himself to say nothing until his father should have finished. And the General had only just begun:

"Is it not enough that I should put up with your clothes, your airs, your jargon, all the marks of the life you have been leading? Is it not enough that I should submit the ladies of my household to the contamination of your presence? I have borne your insulting manners, your lazy, good-for-nothing ways, your constant presence in my house. All these things I have put up with for your mother's sake. She has an idea that you have brains under that ridiculous hair of yours. But I *will* not put up," bellowed the General, who had stamped up and down the room during the delivery of this tirade, "burn my body, sir, I will *not* put up with a man named Mary Anne."

Gerald had been lounging on an ottoman in the center of the room, but the last words drew him to his feet in simple, unaffected wonder. Then he *did* the worst thing possible under the circumstances. He dropped limply back upon his ottoman and laughed long and loud. The more he thought of the ridiculous misunderstanding and of the fun he could make of it when he returned to Paris, the more he laughed, and the more he laughed the more the General raged.

"Remove them at once, you scoundrel. How dare you bring such people into my house? Into your mother's drawing room?"



## ROSNAH

"Now look here," cried Gerald, towering over the General and speaking without a trace of languor or affectation, but with honest indignation. "It's my turn. I've put up with your temper, your criticism, your intolerable manners and your bombast. You asked me to come to your house. I neither wanted to come here nor to stay here, but I did both on account of Sheila and my mother. But I'm not going to stay any longer. I'm going back to Paris, where men think instead of talk, where what a man wants to be is counted as a part of what he is, and where that little unfinished sketch I've been doing of my mother will be more valued than your long list of naked niggers murdered. As to this silly idea you've hit upon about young Desroches, it only betokens your ignorance of every custom beyond the narrow limits of your experience. I shall leave Avonmere to-night when my friends do. But if you dare to give my mother any discreditable explanation of my going, I shall come back, and make you eat your words. I sha'n't disturb her to-night with any fuss and talking. You'd better tell her, at first, that I am only going to show Dublin to these young fellows. And as I do not care to submit them to any more of your insulting hospitality, I shall take them up to my rooms while I am collecting my traps." On his way to the door he turned again and addressed his well-nigh apoplectic parent:

## ROSNAH

"When you drive the others away by your barbarity, and when you begin to bore my mother—as you will, for she is a clever woman and a charming woman, and you are a tiresome man,—send her to me. Since her return from India her sons have given her what you kept from her for so long. She has had admiration, attention, appreciation. Instead of fluttering about in obedience to your whims, she has had four of us to obey hers. She has had a little court of her own and you were too bad tempered and too selfish to be one of her courtiers."

"You lie," snarled the General. "She is much too sensible a woman to care for your fripperies and your affectations of regard."

"Then look at her," challenged his son. "She looks half the age she did. She wears the colors I've prescribed; she reads the books that Desmond gives her; she has promised to visit me in Paris, and," he paused at the door to watch the effect of his last shot, "Sheila and I have been teaching her French. She has read a play by Desroches and knows all about him." And as the General stormed out upon the terrace Gerald went to tell his friends that they were to see the sights of Dublin under his enlightened guidance.

**T**HE packing, in which they all took part, was of a most extraordinary nature, and the equipment which the young foreigners thought necessary to a visit to Dublin would have been equally adapted to a tour of the African jungle. They had read such accounts of unrest and lawlessness that they were strongly in favor of chain armor and a battle-axe or two and were greatly disgusted when Gerald insisted that a vulgar revolver would meet all his requirements.

"But think," urged Marie Anne as he stood beside the open trunk with a pair of rapiers in his hand; "to think of leaving these! A dispute arises, you have no sword! What then will you do?"

"Use my fists," responded Gerald, who was reverting to the original type, "or a shillalah. A club, you know."

"A club, *mon Dieu*," shuddered Marie Anne turning to hang the foils in their place near the window. Gerald chanced to be watching him, saw that his attention was arrested by something outside the window; saw him drop one foil and then vault out onto the terrace with the other gleaming in his hand. Gerald, Maxence de Tournelles and the Duc gathered in the window to watch their friend. They saw him hurrying noiselessly toward that point in

## ROSNAH

the twilight where the red tip of a cigar and an oblong of white shirt front showed that General Fitzgerald was still strolling and smoking; seeking, Gerald imagined, for self-control and calmness in the tender lingering dusk.

Somewhat short of the lonely figure—it looked, somehow, lonely and small out there in the dying light—Marie Anne veered, still noiselessly, towards a big clump of rhododendrons just across the drive. And as the long rapier in the hand of an expert and an enthusiast, did its work, the rhododendrons broke forth into crash of musket and scream of human hurt. And then two men skimmed over the lawn and vanished in the friendly darkness of trees, while the divided household, forgetting its division, gathered about the stone bench upon which the successor of Molière and Racine was calmly sitting.

There was no need for explanation, yet everyone insisted upon explaining. This was where the General stood; he was walking in this direction; this was where the assassins were waiting for him. This was how M. Desroches had crept up to them. They had fired wildly, hitting no one and running away in this direction. But not before M. Desroches had given them a memento of their visit. There was blood on his sword even now.

And through all the uproar M. Desroches sat very quietly upon his marble bench with his fair hair in

## ROSNAH

slight disarray and a quiet little smile on his lips. The blood still trickled quietly, very quietly from his rapier to the ground. With unfailing courtesy he bent his head in acknowledgment of the encomiums showered upon him by Gerald, by the almost hysterical Duc, by the frankly weeping Maxence, by the amazed men servants and the timorous maids. But when Rosnah and Lady Mary appeared, tremulous, shaken and full of questions, M. Desroches arose punctiliously, clicked his high heels together and, with a deprecating smile fainted, very quietly, into the General's arms.

The General was well used to the handling of wounded men and he held the slender body with the gentleness of long practice.

"A bullet through the shoulder," was his diagnosis; "nothing alarming. Very painful though. John, send a groom for the surgeon. Mary, my dear, will you give the necessary orders? I shall keep this young gentleman in my dressing room where Cagney and I can take care of him. Gerald, my boy, you'd better come with us. I am, unfortunately, unable to speak French."

And so when Marie Anne re-entered the great hall at Avonmere, his golden head was pillowed upon General Fitzgerald's shoulder and his eyes were shaded by their long lashes. At a pause in the climb-

## ROSNAH

ing of the stairs the patient turned in the General's arms, and turning, winced.

"Gently, boy, gently now," crooned the war cracked voice of Desmond Fitzgerald, C. B., F. R. G. S., D. C. S., etc., etc., and then knowing that familiar phrases are best for soothing he added: "Ici ong parlay Fransay. Parlay voos Fransay, monsoo?"

The accent of the General's maiden attempt at the language of courts was atrocious, but it seemed to quiet Marie Anne, and at intervals during the night, after the surgeon had come and gone and the stranger lay half feverish, half asleep, General Fitzgerald would steal to the bedside and chirp his panacea:

"Ici ong parlay Fransay. Parlay voos Fransay, monsoo?"

And always the boy would move his uninjured hand toward the General's as he answered:

*"Ah, oui, monsieur. Vous le parle parfaitement, mais parfaitement, vous assure."*

## XXXVI

**O**WEN AND LAWRENCE returned from Dublin in time for breakfast on the next morning and their amazement at the news of the averted tragedy was great. Lawrence was loud in

## ROSNAH

his lamentations that he should have missed the chance of anything so entirely to his mind as a good upstanding fight, but Owen was uneasy and *distract* and asked questions, apparently at random. After breakfast he set off to visit The McCormac while Rosnah and Lawrence adjourned to the rose garden with Adelaide Lytton who had hurried up from the Dower House frankly declaring that she had not dared to hope for such delightful entertainment in quiet Avonmere.

"I want to hear all about everything," she announced. "About the meeting in the Rotunda and about the shooting."

"The one has something to do with the other," was Lawrence's dictum. "If those chaps we heard last night know what they're talking about, then the country is in the devil of a mess and these chaps that go about taking pot shots at people like the Governor have more to say for themselves than you'd think."

"You must tell us what they said," Adelaide urged. "But remember that I'm hopelessly stupid about your politics."

"It's not politics I'm talking. It's history. The country has been in the devil of a way for the devil of a time."

"Long enough to make the people accustomed to it," interposed Adelaide. "Don't trouble yourself

## ROSTNAH

about it. The mission of this country is to furnish excitement for our newspapers and our Parliament."

"But I never knew about it," Lawrence went on aggrievedly. "I never had time to read the papers much and as for history, well they bother a fellow so about Greece and Rome and that sort of thing that a fellow gets to hate the very name of history like sin."

"I know the feeling," Adelaide agreed. "I've hated the very name of Shakespeare since I was dragged through *Hamlet* by my father when I was twelve years old."

"Well, I felt like a fool last night," Lawrence avowed. "They talked so much about the history of Ireland. About the—you'll pardon my saying it, Miss Lytton—the way England has been treating us; taking everything out of the country, the crops for your markets, our better classes for your professions and your society and our young men for your armies and your colonists. They said England had taken away everything from us and never sent us anything in return. The poor fellow," Lawrence hastened to add: "hadn't ever seen you or the Duchess."

"Bravo, Lawrence!" cried Rosnah. "That was a courtly speech."

"And I hope he never will," remarked Miss Lytton. "I hate everything about your politics over here. It's all so noisy and dirty and disreputable. I



## ROSNAH

hate your Agitations; your Land League; your Young Ireland; all the stupid things which Ducky and Mr. Lovell talk so much about. But most of all I hate your politicians. Have you ever thought, by the way, that your youngest brother is liable to get mixed up with them? He is just the sort of fine young fellow that these land leaguers would put up to doing something desperate and then desert."

"Be the lord Harry, he'd not want much putting up to it," cried Lawrence. "I had my hands full with him last night. If I hadn't held him down in his place he'd have been making speeches on the stage. And pleasant reading that would have been for the Governor, eh, Sheila? . 'A fervent address by the eloquent son of General Desmond Fitzgerald, C. B., V. C., J. P., etc., etc.'—but especially Justice of the Peace. When he first bothered me to go with him I was all against it. But go he would, whether or no, so I made the best of a bad bargain and went with him. And I wish to gracious we'd a stayed at home."

"I wish you had," Rosnah agreed. "You might have saved poor M. Desroches. Have you seen him this morning? Is he in much pain?"

But Lawrence could only report that the way to the hero's couch was too carefully guarded for him to travel. The General, Gerald, the Duc and Maxence de Tournelles made a formidable barrier.

## ROSNAH

"And the row those Frenchmen are kicking up is awful," Lawrence went on, "and there's the Governor as patient as a marble statue listening to their lingo and babbling: 'Oui, Oui,' as meek as you please."

"I think it's all ever so jolly," cried Miss Lytton, "though poor Ducky is in dreadful state about it. She insists that she is responsible for whatever happens to you while you are her tenants. Now I call that nonsense. M. Desroches is no tenant and we have an interesting invalid now to read to and entertain. No household should be without one. But Ducky has made up her mind to get at the truth and reason of the thing. She has been interviewing the rowdiest characters ever since breakfast and has no better clue than a Mrs. Moriarity's bible—and slightly bibulous—oath that St. Patrick came to her in a dream and murmured:

" 'Do ghabli O'Grada uile  
Cenel duasbog Donghuile'

which may mean either 'the Campbells are coming' or 'God save the Queen,' for all poor, dear Ducky knows. Then an extremely disreputable person outshone Mrs. Moriarity by demanding what St. Patrick, God bless him, would be bothering his head about the likes of Mrs. Moriarity for with Father Dan equally contagious and a more likely medium

## ROSNAH

for Heavenly messages. This gentleman further complicated matters by asserting that 'there was them in the place could aisy tell whin ghosts was walkin' and demanded what call had furriners puttin' their spake into it at all.' Altogether Ducky is having a very indifferent time of it."

"I shall go down to the Dower House and support her," said Rosnah. "It isn't fair that she should be so troubled upon our account."

But this kindly intention was frustrated by the appearance of Lady Mary, beaming and gracious, in search of her daughter.

"We've just had a wire from Desmond," said she. "He will be here on the 1.15 train and he wants you, dear, to meet him with the dog-cart."

"Wouldn't it be better if one of the boys should go?" suggested Lady Rosnah.

"No, dear, no, the drive will do you good," the Lady Mother urged, and added with the innate respect for telegraphy which some women never outgrow. "You couldn't disappoint him when he paid to put it in. 'Coming home. Arrive 1.15. Dog-cart and Sheila at station.'"

"The cart before the girl, bedad!" laughed Lawrence. "I'm dashed if I'd go; ordered about like a horse."

Rosnah blushed brightly under Adelaide's mocking regard and was half inclined to take Lawrence's view

## ROSNAH

of the matter; half glad that Desmond had thought of her; all glad that he was coming home.

"Stop teasing your sister, sir," chided Lady Mary. "You are jealous because your brother trusts himself to her driving instead of to yours. Sheila, dear, you will just have time to put on your hat. And, when you are upstairs, will you look into Desmond's rooms and see if Ameera and Mary housemaid have put them in perfect order? I often wonder if he is comfortable here with us after the really luxurious way he seems to live in London."

Rosnah was already—as always—beautifully dressed, but she hurried to her room, summoning Ameera to assist her and leaving Mary housemaid to toil alone. There was a gown which Desmond had once admired and Rosnah was quickly struggling with its intricacies. A blue and white dimity gown it was with myriads of tiny flounces and a graceful overskirt of plain blue. There were knowing black velvet bows and soft ruffles of old lace. There were touches and harmonies of line and color which had prompted Desmond to say: "I love to see you in simple things like that blue and white cotton of yours," which words of praise would surely have compensated Worth for the pains he had taken about that simplicity—if they could have reached him. Rosnah in this gown with a wide hat secured by a blue ribbon under her round chin was enough to

## ROSNAH

arouse the admiration of an observer less prejudiced than her brother. Ameera hovered about her charge-ling with murmurs of appreciation and produced at the last moment a bunch of many colored sweet peas which she pinned into Rosnah's bodice. And it was a sweet graceful figure which moved along the hall to Desmond's door. After an instant's hesitation she turned the handle and entered.

The outer room was high and spacious. Its windows overlooked the winding avenue. Its furniture was massive and was disposed with almost geometric exactitude. There was a large book-covered table in the centre. In one window recess a well appointed desk. In another a deep chair with a low table beside it. Other chairs, a sofa, a newspaper stand and lectern completed the furnishings. Everywhere there were books in orderly lines or ranges and upon the walls a moderate number of pictures. There were portraits of lights of law, the houses of Parliament from the Thames, an old, old photograph of the General and Lady Mary almost unrecognizable in their strange costumes and yet stranger youth, and a group of self-conscious college boys in cap and gown. Among these she recognized Desmond, young and callow with trusting eyes, unobscured as yet by glasses, and the tenderest young mouth. It made Rosnah wish, somehow, that the boy had had his mother to take care of him. Near him stood John

## ROSNAH

Lovell, also callow and also clad in a suit of clothes much too small for him but Rosnah wasted no time upon a consideration of his guileless physiognomy.

So far everything was as neat as even Lady Mary could desire and Rosnah, with an air of being pre-occupied with carpets and curtains—an air, which must have been intended to impress her own truant fancy, as she had no more critical audience—crossed to the other door.

This room was even more monastic in its severity. The appointments of the dressing table, like those of the desk in the outer room, were handsome, solid, eminently durable. But for the rest this might have been the cell of a monk. And yet not quite. On the wall opposite the window hung a fifteen-minute sketch which Gerald had made of his sister and then—unaccountably—lost, and on the table at the bedside lay a little green and gold book.

She crossed the room, nodded saucily to Gerald's version of her charms and took up the little book. *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, she read, and idly turned the leaves. A pencilled page caught her eye; the book lay flatly open at it:

“If I leave all for thee wilt thou exchange

And be all to me? Shall I never miss

Hometalk and blessing and the common kiss—”

So home talk was dear to him? A blessing? And the common kiss. Well, so far, she had eluded that,

## ROSNAH

though Lady Mary sometimes made escape most difficult. And who was this for whom he might exchange these things? Had his indifference to women been qualified, perhaps caused, by his affection for a woman? Who was she? Where was she? Was it to see her that Desmond had gone up to town? Perhaps, perhaps! But why then had he not stayed with her? He was coming back to Avonmere. Coming back to "home talk and blessing and the common kiss—"

It was as well, she reflected, that she was to meet him at the station, where the last of these could not be expected of her.

## XXXVII

**I**N his haste to inform The McCormac of the events of the preceding eventful night, Owen neglected to provide himself with an interpreter, but he was fortunate enough to find a young lady breakfasting with that genial misanthrope. So young a lady was Miss Biddy O'Rourke as to be barely perceptible among the folds of the linen napkin in which her host had swathed her and to find the management of the heavy silver spoon with which she was eating stirabout and cream rather difficult. She greeted Owen with a wide and creamy smile, but

## ROSNAH

went serenely on with her repast as The McCormac looked up from his more complicated breakfast:

"Biddy will tell you, lad, when she has quite finished her breakfast, that I am delighted to see you. She is wondering, now, if you would care for a cup of tea? No? Is there anything else? No? Then sit down and tell her about the meeting last night. Who spoke? How were they received? How did they impress you? Biddy is keenly anxious to hear about it all."

Even Owen's gloomy preoccupation was, perforce, diverted by this remark and his slow smile encouraged Biddy to wave her spoon at him as he answered:

"If I did not know that our young friend's manners are too exquisite to allow her to eat and drink simultaneously, I should ask her to thank you for your welcome. Meanwhile I shall be delighted to tell her about the meeting. The Rotunda, my dear Madam, was crowded and the Chairman opened the proceedings by reading a most enthusiastic telegram from Mr. Parnell. He is being received with all honor everywhere in America, and the generosity of the people is overwhelming. Dillon telegraphs in a similar strain. There never were such meetings!"

"Ha!" snorted the invalid. "Then, Biddy, what do you make of this?" and he drew from the heap of letters and papers which towered over his breakfast



## ROSNAH

tray a much crumpled paper. His hands shook as he turned to the page he wanted and his whole aspect grew so threatening that Biddy dropped her spoon and took up her station on the very verge of tears:

"Ask Mr. Fitzgerald," thundered The McCormac. "Ask him what he thinks of a misrepresentative press which would print lies and slander about an absent antagonist. The London papers say that Parnell and Dillon have failed at all points and are injuring the cause of Ireland among her exiled children. Oh, the villains! The sly and bloody villains. I told Mr. Fitzgerald when he first came here they do not desire the relief of Ireland, not the feeding of the hungry, the burial of the dead, the comfort of the comfortless. Do they rejoice because all this wealth is being dedicated to these ends? No! they want to force Ireland to crawl to England's feet. To crawl there broken and begging, crying for mercy and bread."

The underlip of the interpreter projected ominously, and, laying down her porringer, she turned and hid her face against the chair. But The McCormac swept on:

"Yes, we are to take food and mercy from their Dukes and Duchesses, from their canting, sniveling, organized charities. Blankets and corn they dole out to us. Blankets and corn! The very devil in—where he is—" He checked himself in deference to

## ROSNAH

the baby who was his guest—"must laugh at us. Blankets and corn in return for our blood, our honor and our country!"

At this point the interpreter fell over backwards in a paroxysm of fear and tears. Instantly The McCormac checked his ardor with:

"There, there, now, Biddy, my dear, you must control yourself. The situation is painful, very painful—" and so Biddy seemed to find it, for she had caught one bare foot in her chair's carven back and was suspended, head down, in the toils of her napkin. "But not hopeless, you see," the voice from the bed resumed as Owen restored Miss O'Rourke to the perpendicular. "And, perhaps," the host continued through the wild lamentations of the guest: "perhaps if Mr. Fitzgerald were to hand you to me you might be interested in this top of an egg shell with some of the white still intact, and," as this inducement produced a lull, "in this teacup, rather cold and nearly empty, but with a considerable amount of undissolved sugar remaining in it. These remedies, simple in themselves, I have frequently proved to be efficacious. Will you ask Mr. Owen to relinquish you to my care? There now! Oh, what a rainy face! Where's the handkerchief I keep for such emergencies? Lean against this arm. Quite comfy now? Then which first, tea or egg?"

"Bofe," answered the interpreter. It was her first

## ROSNAH

articulate utterance for that morning, and not thinking of any way in which she could improve upon it, she allowed it to be her last.

But it was one of The McCormac's talkative days and he and Owen had much to discuss. For with this young Fitzgerald as his lieutenant, with all the children as his messengers, with his large correspondence, and his extended reading, The McCormac was taking a more and more important place in local affairs. Owen had disregarded the Duchess's warning and was an almost daily visitor at the house of the Children's Ould Gentleman, and there he heard a great deal more perfervid eloquence than his young enthusiasm could digest.

But truly the case of that "distressful country" defied exaggeration in that sorrowful year of 1880. There in Wicklow matters were bad enough, in the thrifty manufacturing North they were somewhat better, but in the agricultural portions of the island, and it was essentially an agricultural country, the conditions were appalling. There had been a falling off in the principal crops from the yield of the previous year to the value of £10,000,000. The value of the potato crop was more than £6,000,000 below the average and still the rents went up. The death rate grew, and still the rents went up. Famine and pestilence broke out in districts most entirely agricultural, 17,000 men, women and children died

## ROSNAH

of hunger. Thousands of homesteads were turned into grazing land, but still, for such tenants as remained, the rents went up.

And the solemn British Parliament (the cliffs of the English shore are visible from many points of Ireland and the narrow channel separating them may be crossed in a few hours), the solemn, serious British Parliament was "disposed to believe," according to Sir S. Northcote, "that the Irish distress had no serious foundation except in the imagination of the Home Rulers and anti-rent agitators." Parliament had turned deaf ears to the Irish representatives until the country was blazing with rebellion, honeycombed with leagues, factions, parties, clans, Fenians, beset with demigods, leaders and martyrs and torn with hunger, jealousy and dissension. And the rents went up!

They climbed steadily. While Sydney Lanier, a poet in far-away Georgia, was writing:

"Heartsome Ireland, winsome Ireland,  
Charmer of the sun and sea,  
Bright beguiler of old anguish,  
How could Famine frown on thee?

"As our Gulf Stream, drawn to thee-ward,  
Turns him from his northward flow,  
And our wintry western headlands  
Send thee summer from their snow,

## ROSNAH

"Thus the main and cordial current  
Of our love sets over sea,—  
Tender, comely, valiant Ireland,  
Streaming warm to comfort thee."

This was poor Lady Mary's land of peace, and if she and the General had guessed in what society Owen spent so many hours of his nights, they would have been more uneasy than war in foreign lands had ever made them. For Owen, though he accepted all The McCormac's warped history and sometimes swollen statistics, utterly declined his conclusion that there was nothing to be done. Something must be done. He was young and of the stuff that makes martyrs. One old man might lie in his bed and croak that nothing could be gained. Nothing but death and ridicule, disgrace and degradation. But Owen at wild midnight meetings, at secret gatherings, and from strange sources heard a very different theory. He pledged himself to a very different method.

The attack upon his father's person had surprised him. There was, so far as he knew, no reason for it, but when he related the circumstances to his friend, that astute philosopher supplied the motive unhesitatingly.

"He's been seen riding and walking with that Cooper fellow, Lord Andover's agent. A man with

## ROSNAH

the heart of a dog—no, I apologize to the dog—the heart of an English understrapper, as he is. Your father has been warned several times.”

“You’ve known of this then?” cried Owen.

The McCormac drew himself up on his pillows as the deaf servant came to remove the tray, proceedings to which the interpreter objected silently, forcibly and vainly.

“Biddy will tell you,” he answered, “that a surprising number of things—beside Mahomet—will come to the mountain if the mountain have sufficient patience. This piece of gossip came with others equally uninteresting. I did not at the time, nor do I now, find it of interest. Miss O’Rourke is sure that you have heard some expression of my opinion of an Irish gentleman who chooses the profession which the individual in question has—shall we say?—adorned. She is persuaded that you will not expect me to regard his demise, by violent or other means, with anything but satisfaction.”

## XXXVIII

**M**HE household at Avonmere generally went to Dublin for its trains, but there was, upon a branch line, a little station about three miles distant *via* lanes and boreens and huddled villages. It was to this station that Lady Rosnah drove through

## ROSNAH

the clear sunshine to meet Desmond Fitzgerald. The hedges were sweet with the songs of birds and the occasional wayfarer stood, open mouthed, as the glistening dog-cart passed with jingling harness and a no less glistening horse in the shafts. There was a light in Rosnah's eyes which no one who knew her had yet seen there. It would be carefully banished before the train came in. But meanwhile many a man went on his way with a better courage and many a woman bent once more to the burden of the day, feeling that the world was not all unfriendly since such visions might be met on life's highway. Sometimes the vision stopped and spoke—to the accompaniment of the tinkle of a little silver purse. Sometimes it only leaned from its high place and patted the tousled head of some child who whimpered in its mother's arms. And many were the blessings called down on her fair head, and many were the prayers that followed her.

"Glory be to goodness," cried Mrs. Ryan to her neighbor, old Biddy O'Driscoll, when the last flutter of blue disappeared round the turn in the road. "If you was to come upon her unbeknownst in the chapel—an' it dark—God only knows what scandeelious notions would come into a body's head to see her so sweet in her blue and white with that soft little smile on her face."

When the train drew up only one passenger

## ROSNAH

alighted, a holiday making youth in light tweeds with a gay ribbon round his hat and Rosnah, with a quick sinking of the heart and swelling of the throat, turned her horse's head homewards. Gray tweeded youngsters were no longer anything to her. Her disappointment was poignant, amazing, out of all proportion, so she chided herself, to the trivial cause. But the horse was interested and awed by the snorting of the engine, so that there was a delay of some moments in calming him, and during these moments the traveler secured his traps, sprang up the few steps of the embankment, and, hat in hand, advanced upon the amazed Rosnah.

"This is good of you," cried Desmond as he took his place beside her. And during the almost automatic give and take of greeting and of question Desmond found time to admire her tactful management of the restive horse and to reflect that this sister of his was even more satisfying than his memory had pictured her. Memory had not, for instance, done justice of her pretty little ear or to the glistening, golden, soft little down which marked the line where her hair met her clear white skin. She was made of beautiful material and exquisitely finished. Her eye-brows and her lashes showed the same care for detail, the same precision. The black met the white without a blur. And again her proud little mouth. The red joined the white smoothly, exactly.



## ROSNAH

Even the brilliant sunshine pouring down upon her could find no flaw in that face. And her voice seemed sweet and musical as she carried on her part in the perfunctory conversation. When the weather on the channel, the heat of the day, the turmoil of Town had received proper attention Desmond repeated:

"This is good of you! I wanted to hear the news from you before meeting the others."

"And there is serious news to tell. I wrote to you about the eviction of Mrs. O'Donnell and of Owen's infatuation for The McCormac. These are bad enough, but you've not heard about last night."

"Last night? Have I so narrowly missed anything?"

Rosnah told him in as few words as possible, and he listened very gravely. "And I think Owen knows something about it," she ended miserably. "And, oh! I'm so glad you've come back!"

"So am I," he answered heartily. "Have you been able to keep the *mater* placid through it all?"

"So far, yes. But it can't go on. Of course, this morning she had young Desroches to be busy about and then your telegram. But an occurrence like that is difficult to explain away."

"We'll manage it," said Desmond with almost boyish optimism. "And now go on. Is there any less serious news?"

"There is, if you can be interested in anything so

## ROSTNAH

frivolous, an incipient flirtation," she laughed, "between Lawrence and Adelaide Lytton."

"Impossible!"

"But true. He's a changed man. She borrowed his big horseshoe pin and carefully lost it. She told him how handsome he looked in a black scarf and he gave all the others to Carey. You'll hardly know him. He hasn't seen the stables for a week; he gave away his bull terrier and he is beginning to flatten his a's in can't and shan't."

"Poor old chap! I know the symptoms well," sighed Desmond in assumed sorrow. "And what does Lovell say to it all. He is not likely to allow a fortune like Miss Lytton's to escape him. It's all very nice for Lawrence. He is old Uncle Lawrence's namesake and heir, but Lovell *must* marry money." Desmond was not proud of that speech, and there was a flicker of malice and mischief in Rostnah's eye as she answered:

"I think you wrong Mr. Lovell when you hint at his being mercenary. He is quite as nice to me as he is to Adelaide, even though she does belong to the big London world. She may be clever and sophisticated and rich and I may be none of these things, but Mr. Lovell would be the last person in this part of the world to accuse me of stupidity and inexperience and poverty."

"My dear Sheila," said Desmond, startled by this

## ROSNAH

burst of self-justification, "you don't think that I am comparing that shallow-pated, cold-hearted, insolent young woman with my peerless sister! You can't think that—"

"I do think that," she cried in well assumed temper. "And I think you're jealous of Lawrence and of poor Mr. Lovell, too."

"Sheila!"

"Yes, I do think it. You're always saying sneering things about Mr. Lovell and he always says the nicest things about you. All this time that you've been away he has been most kind. Mamma is quite devoted to him, and he helped me beautifully in calming her about Mrs. O'Donnell. To listen to him one would have thought an eviction rather a pleasant change from the tedium of every day. He found a deliciously clean old beggar woman, with a merry eye and a beautiful manner. And he handed her over to mamma who is delighted with her. The jolly old creature sits beside the kitchen fire—or in the doorway when the weather is fine—and whenever mamma goes down to talk to her she hops up to bob a curtsy and to kiss her hand as jolly as a sand-boy. Always ready for a cup of tea or a drop of something stronger; knitting endless stockings; a perfect pensioner and such a comfort to mamma! Only yesterday I heard her saying to Mr. Lovell that the happiness of the lower classes in this coun-

## ROSNAH

try was such a relief from the misery in India. Mr. Lovell looked rather embarrassed and apologetic, for he knows that poor old 'dark' Molly—isn't that a kindly way of saying insane—has been quite mad for years. Her story is one of incredible, unsurpassable misery. She will tell you, as she tells everyone, that she is knitting stockings for her man or for one of her boys, but all the countryside knows that the husband and the children starved and died in one of the famine years."

"My dear sister," urged Desmond, "you grow morbid. This sad old country saddens you. But when I get you to London—"

"Aye, then!" smiled Rosnah. "But," dutifully, "perhaps I shan't be able to get away. Perhaps papa—"

"Of course you will," he insisted. "And I've brought you a tiny illustration of the sort of thing you will find waiting for you there. Here. Let me take the reins while you read your message from Bond Street."

Lady Rosnah exchanged the reins for a flat important looking package. She unfolded the heavy white paper; opened the blue leather box and gazed, almost glared, at the heavy gold bangle lying on its velvet pillow and winking at her with its deep sapphire eyes. This was a situation upon which she had not counted and for which she had no words ready.

## ROSNAH

"Well, don't you like it?" he asked with disappointment in his voice. "I got those stones because you wear so much blue and look so well in it. And didn't you know I should bring you something from London? Put it on. I want to see it on your arm."

"Indeed and indeed I like it," she parried. "I love it. Sapphires are the stones I most admire. But it is wrong of you to be so extravagant. Although so kind. This is much too handsome a thing for everyday. Much too handsome to wear with any of my poor little frocks."

But this he would not admit. He reiterated that her things, however simple and befitting the costume of a *jeune fille*, seemed to him as smart and dainty as any he saw in London. Nevertheless he had remembered her complaints and—she was not to be surprised—he had bought her two gowns. Jolly ones all velvet and lace and fal-lals. One was royal blue and the other white. He had been assured that they were in the latest mode and, though that sort of shopping was unusual in his experience he had really rather enjoyed it.

Rosnah looked at him. Only looked at him; while the blush of which he had long ago spoken to the Duchess dyed all her pretty face.

"You're joking," she said at last. "You wouldn't have done such a thing!"

"Wouldn't I, though," answered this utterly de-

## ROSNAH

moralized Q. C. "Just you wait until you see them. The stout French person to whom one of my friends directed me wanted to palm off a soft, pinky thing on me instead of the blue. But when I caught sight of that royal blue velvet nothing else would satisfy me. She says she was making it for a Marchioness, but she's copying it for me. She's promised that your maid—that's Ameera, I suppose—could make it fit you. So now you see you *must* come to London if only to wear your grandeur. And, I say, I'll put you on an allowance and you can get as many other jim-cracks as you want."

"You shouldn't have done it," repeated Rosnah, "I had no idea—how could one guess? Of course, it is ever so good of you, Desmond, but I'm not accustomed to accepting presents like that from anyone. And I want you," she added with a happy inspiration, "to take care of my beautiful bracelet for me," and she shut it into its box again, "until I can wear it and the royal blue gown for the first time together. Will you, Desmond?"

"Very well," he agreed slowly as she took the reins again and the dog-cart swung into the avenue. "A child could play with me now I'm so glad to get home!"

## ROSNAH

### XXXIX

**R**OSNAH, on the night of Old John's "tantrum," hardly expected to find herself following the example of Step Aside and appealing to Moira Keegan for assistance. And yet, as Owen's comings and goings grew ever more irregular, and as bandit looking people began to interview him in secluded parts of the Avonmere grounds, Rosnah bethought her of Owen's description of Moira's power over and knowledge of men and things in the village, and determined to appeal to this stranger to protect Owen from his own enthusiasm and from the influence of The McCormac.

At the end of a perfect day in June Moira looked up from her lace making and saw Lady Rosnah standing among the flowers of her little garden. Beautiful and patrician did her visitor look, and loudly did that "different, different," ring in Moira's ears. But when she hurried out to greet her guest she found, to her amazement, that Rosnah was distressed, unhappy, and she forgot all else.

"I came to see you," Rosnah began after the prescribed preliminaries, when the two girls were sitting in the shade of a rose bush, "about my brother Owen." Moira only nodded. For all the kingdoms of the world she could not have spoken.

"We are much troubled about him," Rosnah went

## ROSNAH

on, "and we were wondering whether you, knowing him so well, could help us."

Moira found her voice, but not much of it. She could only ask:

"We? You and the Lady Mary?"

"No," said Rosnah. "Lady Mary suspects nothing. But Desmond, my eldest brother, and I have been uneasy about him for some days. He is, you must have noticed, extremely delicate, and I fear he is extremely unhappy, too."

Again Moira nodded.

"He is unhappy," she acquiesced. "He suffers very much. He cannot grow reconciled to the lives—and the deaths—he sees in this miserable country."

"We blame ourselves, Desmond and I, for letting him brood so much alone. We should have known how these things would appear to him. Do you know anything about his education? About the history of our extraordinary family?"

"Very little," Moira answered. "Mr. Fitzgerald told me that his father and mother had been in India for thirty years and had only just returned after all that time. He said that you, his own sister and his own brothers, were utter strangers to him. That he had never seen you until a month ago, and that he feared he would never understand you."

"I know, I know," interrupted Rosnah, as Moira



## ROSTNAH

paused, flushed and embarrassed. "He considers us utterly heartless, does he not?"

"I fear he does," said Moira. "But, as he says, he does not understand you."

"I know. We must strike him so. Aunt Lucinda, who took Owen when he was a tiny, delicate child, is a poetess. She lives in Coventry. A wonderful, charming woman, I have always heard, full of dreams and hopes and ideals. She got a tutor for Owen—he was never strong enough for school—a man as unpractical as herself. And between them they made him what he is. He told me that they never read newspapers in that house, and they equipped him for his visit to this country by a course of Moore's poems, the *Annals of the Four Masters* and a careful training in all the wild dreams of freedom and of martyrdom which torture the history of this poor country. No wonder he is a stranger among his own people. No wonder he can't reconcile what he sees with what he has been taught!"

"No wonder, indeed!" echoed Moira. "For even I, who was never taught at all, see things in this village which make me wish that I had been born blind."

"And now," Rosnah resumed, after a pause, "we have begun to fear that he has been entangled in our miserable politics. He is out nearly all night and every night. We know that he has been making

## ROSNAH

speeches, and we know the General, his father, will be merciless as the Government if he is detected."

Moirra had grown very white and quiet while Rosnah was speaking, and it was some moments before she turned to her and asked:

"Are you sure of the things you say?"

"Quite sure. And Desmond and I thought we could do no better than appeal to you to use your influence with Owen and with the people roundabout. If he goes on it will mean ruin, not only for himself, but for all of us. His father has served the Queen for thirty years. His brother is a Queen's Council in London. If their son and brother were proved a traitor—"

"He is no traitor," said Moirra. "If what you say is true—"

"It is true," Rosnah interrupted.

"Then he has been driven to it by what he sees about him as many have been before him, and many will be again. And neither I nor any power in the world can stop him unless we can get him away from the things that he can't bear. It's like," she went on wildly, "it's like tearing the heart out of my body. It's like drowning my life in the sea, but if you and Mr. Desmond want to stop your brother, you will have to send him away."

Rosnah forgot her own unhappiness in a surge of pity for the girl beside her.

## ROSNAH

"Ah, my dear, my dear!" she cried and took her hand. "I might have guessed. I might have feared."

Moirá shook her head.

"There is nothing to fear," she said. "And as for guessing, there is no need of that, because I will tell you freely all there is to tell. Mr. Fitzgerald is as the sun in the sky to me. He has never set foot in my house, but this garden where he sometimes comes and talks will be beautiful and fragrant to me, even when it is covered with snow, and dead. He has never said a word to me that he hasn't said fifty times to many a man, woman or child he thinks nothing of, and yet I remember every word of his as though it were the voice of Heaven. He has never looked at me except as he might at any man, woman or child he'd meet in the ordinary business of an ordinary day. But to me his eyes are as the stars. The memory of them would be light enough for me if all God's other lights went out. And yet I say to you: Send him away. I would give everything I have to my country's cause. But this one treasure, that I shall never possess, I would die to save from her. Send him away."

For some space the girls sat silent side by side. And when Rosnah spoke again it was by manner, voice and eyes rather than by words that she answered Moirá. It was with a new air of confidence and intimacy that she said:



“‘But, to me, his eyes are as the stars.’”

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## ROSNAH

"Desmond and I are wondering whether we could persuade him to go to America. He is actually burning away with fever and unhappiness and none of us can comfort him or influence him to take even the most ordinary precautions about his health. He wants care and peace and happiness—so the doctors tell us—and he has none of these. Desmond knows some people who are going out to look at a cattle ranch, or gold mine, or something in Colorado. We shall try to arrange for Owen to go with them. They would be good to him. But meanwhile, any day or night may make it all too late and that is why we want you to help us. Will you, as we know you can, have him watched?"

"He shall be watched," said Moira.

And Rosnah returned to Avonmere greatly comforted.

## XL

A VERY short observation of Owen's manner convinced Desmond that Rosnah had been right in thinking that Lady Mary's "baby" had found strange playfellows during his big brother's absence. Desmond quickly found corroboration of all Rosnah's anxious report. The boy was moody, furtive and intensely nervous. He seemed to with-

## ROSNAH

draw with an air almost of censure from the little gaieties, the badinage and the general atmosphere of light-hearted holiday making which even the accident to young Desroches—for everyone agreed, with as much conviction as they might, that it *was* an accident—had failed to destroy. The genial Lawrence even went so far as to tell Maxence de Tournelles that the armed persons in the rhododendrons were the suitors of two of the maids who nightly prowled about the house in the hope of catching a word with or a glimpse of their divinities. This romantic solution he made the more convincing by pointing out the damsels in question with whom thereafter the Frenchmen were intensely jocular and confidential by signs and gesticulations. But these virtuous and unsuspecting females replied with a frank: “Be off wid ye now out of me way before the mistress catches ye.” Or a puzzled: “Bad cess to the man; what’s he doin’ at all, at all. Is it twistin’ the eyes out of yer head ye are, sorr?”

The attempt upon the General’s person was not repeated, but the whole spirit of the place was changed. The servants, once so good humored and unaffected, became furtive and non-committal. The country people no longer greeted the Avonmere equipage with cheers and whole-hearted blessings. Even the tide of beggars which had ebbed and flowed about Lady Mary grew weak and professional.

## ROSNAH

It was high time, thought Desmond, before he had been at home a week, that some one should hold the reins in this household, every member of which veered from the normal in some direction. Each one of them, beginning with the host and continuing to the garrulous Duc, was in need of guidance and guarding. Everyone but Rosnah, who saw as much of the changed conditions as he did and who understood them twice as well. Rosnah, who, with the possible exception of Lady Mary, was the only member of the family in whose safety and happiness he felt the slightest spontaneous interest. Nevertheless, his sense of duty told him that something must be done and that he was the one to do it.

A week of uninterrupted bad weather had a very serious effect upon the whole situation. Desmond held many consultations with Rosnah and kept a more and more uneasy watch upon the erratic comings and goings of Owen.

And it was Owen, who, at last, echoed Desmond's conscience and showed him what to do.

"Look here, Desmond," he cried finding his brother alone in the library one wet afternoon. "Look here, Desmond, have you any influence with that blunder-headed father of ours?"

"A little, I think."

"Well, there's something he must be forced to do. I never could make him see anything; he is hardly



## ROSNAH

civil to Lawrence; he treats Gerald like a dog. And yet he goes and makes a companion of a blood-sucker, a cad, and brings all this trouble about. He knows the reason of that shooting affair, but he thinks no one else does. He had been fraternizing with the most inhuman agent in the countryside. A boycotted man. You know what that means."

"By Jove, I do."

"And he has been warned. Several times. Though I only learned of it lately; and he goes insanely about refusing to recognize any danger because he is not afraid. He was in the fellow's house yesterday. He'll be shot in good earnest if he goes on. No one but a lunatic would defy those poor wretches. They're mad, I tell you. And what shall we say to the Lady Mother when he's potted from behind a wall."

"He's a brave man," Desmond submitted, "even if he be—"

"He's a fool," corrected Owen. "And he would take my warnings just as he has taken the others. But he might listen to you. Go up now and try. He has an enormous respect for anything that comes from London. Will you come to my room afterwards? I want to hear how you fare."

Desmond found the General in his dressing room and was listened to. Desmond spoke well, carefully and at length. He described the gravity of the

## ROSNAH

situation; the disturbed condition of the peasantry: the vital importance of maintaining whatever order it was possible to maintain until the Government should have found a policy and the means to carry it out. The General listened, uninterested, but patient.

Desmond then urged more personal considerations. The undesirability of allowing any further violence to intrude upon the happiness of Avonmere. The distress of Lady Mary in such a contingency. The danger to the entire household. The responsibility to the already sufficiently injured guests.

"Now, sir," said Desmond in conclusion, "surely all these objections will outweigh any pleasure you can derive from the society of this man."

"Pleasure?" repeated his father. "Do you think I associate with land agents for pleasure?"

"Then why?"

"Because of the insulting letter which some scoundrel addressed to me after my first meeting with the fellow. I was riding alone, lost my way, inquired it of him. He admired 'Captain' and we rode on together for a mile or two. Never intended to see him again until a scurrilous letter arrived the next day saying that I was 'watched.' Care to see it? There it is. And here are its precious followers," and the General opened a drawer and tossed a bundle of unsightly papers to his son. They were all to one

## ROSNAH

purpose. Emphasized by many black crosses and unintelligible hieroglyphics, exclamation points and underlinings; they warned the General to hold no further communion with Mr. Cooper.

"I find one or two each morning," he explained. "I am, fortunately, always the first down. That yard square masterpiece in your hand I found adhering to the outside of the breakfast-room window a day or two ago. The fools choose the most extraordinary channels for their correspondence. They little know that they are affording me the only ray of excitement which I find in this half dead place."

"One may pay too highly for one's excitement," Desmond remarked. His mood was hardly more pleasant than his father's. He was, in his own world and profession, accustomed to the approval and attention of men of a rank and talent far superior to the bad tempered old veteran of obscure Indian campaigns who received his present arguments with so ill a grace.

"And do you mean to suggest," the General stormed as his purple face grew still more purple, "that I should submit to the dictates of these bog-trotters? And that you, sir, you who gained the right to call yourself Q. C., would accept the authority of rebels? How can you justify yourself, sir? Answer me that. But don't speak to me. I refuse to hear you."

## ROSNAH

"You have heard me, sir," answered Desmond with almost visible self-control, "and since you now understand the gravity of the case I trust you will find a less costly form of amusement. Why not invite some of your fellow-officers to visit us here? Or go up to town for a week and take my mother with you? Sheila and the rest of us can look after ourselves and young Desroches can be moved in a day or two."

"You are very kind," said the General with an ugly look which belied his words, "to give so much thought to my diversions. But I see no reason to leave my own house, and I am not accustomed to choose my associates according to the dictates of a native rabble; black or—I had almost said white. Black or dirty."

It required some effort on Desmond's part to speak calmly:

"But for a mere matter of pique or of annoyance you will hardly endanger the peace and happiness—"

"There is no question of danger," reiterated his father. "The curs only snarl. And upon a matter of principle and dignity I require no advice. The situation is, you must admit, more native to my profession than to yours. You may rest assured, however, that your words will not fail of their purpose. I shall—he smiled abominably—"consider it my first

## ROSNAH

duty to protect your person. Your alarm is natural—to one of your profession—but unnecessary.”

Desmond controlled the most murderous flame of passion which had ever rent his placid nature.

“Then you will—?” he asked and paused.

“Invite Mr. Cooper to lunch with us upon the first opportunity,” the General answered blandly.

## XLI

**D**ESMOND'S interview with the General had consumed less than the half of an hour, and yet when he entered Owen's room he found the boy face downward among the pillows deeply asleep. One of his arms was under him, but Desmond, standing at the foot of the bed, saw that the other hand which lay limply open was thin and work stained. Problem upon problem! What was he doing? Why were his hands like that? Like an engineer's or a plumber's, Desmond recognized. And why should he sleep like this, dropping into a very stupor of fatigue at a moment's relaxation?

As Desmond moved to the chair beside the bed, Owen, with a sigh, turned his face to his brother's, but did not awaken. Such a tired, worn face, now that sleep had robbed it of the fictitious energy of expression. And such a young, young face, now

## ROSNAH

that its deep eyes were closed. It might have been a girl's with its soft curves and colors and the tangle of black hair which shaded it. As Desmond sat beside the sleeping boy in the soft twilight his heart softened and yearned toward this child of his house who was yet a stranger to him. He thought of Rosnah's sympathy and understanding of him. Of her anxiety as to his health, both of body and of mind. And he wondered how much of the blundered past might be retrieved; how much confidence could be established at this late hour. What were the boy's hopes and ambitions? Who his friends? What had been his mode of life in quiet Coventry?

Desmond tried to put himself in the other's place; tried to imagine the varied and painful readjustments which he had been forced to make. Already, Desmond saw, Owen had tested his father and two of his brothers and had been disappointed in them, and realized that he, too, must seem unpatriotic, insincere and shallow to this spirit all aflame at his first sight of cruelty and suffering.

Surely, as Rosnah had said, the political and social conditions of the real Ireland must be painfully disillusionizing to a youth nurtured on legends and poems of *The Emerald Gem of the Western World*. The transition from Thomas Moore to "The McCormac" was a difficult one. But it might be easier for him; it should be made easier for him.

## ROSNAH

He should be coaxed to London and forced to take the very best medical opinion. He was only a lonely, unhappy child. And Desmond felt a glow of kindness and elder brotherliness which surprised him and which prompted him to slip an arm under Owen's shoulders, and, with a careful, but unaccustomed hand, to press the pillows into greater comfort. The regularity of the boy's breathing was interrupted only for a moment, and Desmond, who had never performed so intimate a service in his selfish life, was much elated by his success. He was gathering his energies for the more difficult task of adjusting the whole relaxed body to a more easy position and covering it with the counterpane when the door opened noisily and Lawrence clanked in. One of his spurs caught in a rug and he stumbled forward with an amazed:

"Hello, you fellows, what *are* you up to? Owen ill? Only asleep? That's right. Then was Desmond trying to pick your pocket? Looked devilish like it, be the powers, bending over you so quietly."

Owen, all awake upon the instant, turned to Desmond with a quick suspicion. He entertained a wholesome fear of this quiet man whose work it was to forward and protect the Law. And Desmond, as he offered the true and amazing explanation for his position, felt that he could willingly have spared Lawrence from the great plan of "Things Entire."

## ROSNAH

But Owen recovered himself quickly and was all eagerness to hear how Desmond had fared with the General, and, when he heard, he turned to his eldest brother with unimpaired confidence:

"And now, what's to be done?" he asked.

"I'm of the opinion that we should not be justified in keeping these important matters from the others whom they so much concern."

"Not the Lady Mother?"

"No. But Lawrence here?"

"You can spare yourself the trouble," said Lawrence. "I've known it as long as yourselves, an' I spoke to 'Stormalong' about it some time ago. I thought he had given up talking to that Cooper."

"Well, then, I propose that we inform Sheila and Gerald. Let us discuss the thing rationally together and decide upon some plan of action. We can't stand about like mummies and let one man's bad temper ruin everything."

"Sheila! A girl?" asked Owen. "Wouldn't she get hysterical or something?"

"Hysterics would be more like Gerald," Lawrence broke in; "but I'd be willing to bet my last penny on Sheila. She has as good a head as any of us."

Desmond hardly felt the commendation to be as emphatic as it was meant to be.

"Lawrence," he asked, "do you know where Gerald is?"



## ROSNAH

"In the studio with young Desroches."

"And Sheila?"

"Reading aloud to mother in the library."

"Then if you two will come along to my room," said Desmond, "I'll summon the others. I'll send Tim for Gerald and Ameera for Sheila. If I go into the library I shall have to stay and talk, and there is no time for that sort of thing. Come on. I'll light the lamps."

## XLII

**THE** Queen and the Princess Beatrice," read Rosnah, "returned to Windsor at the end of last week. Before leaving town Her Majesty and the Princess paid a private visit to the New India Museum."

At this point the girl glanced up. During the last ten minutes she had held her voice upon a soothing monotone and its effect was not lost upon Lady Mary. Her hands were still among the colored wools in her lap, but the long knitting needles had ceased from clicking. The shawl for the cheerful old beggar woman was blighted in its growth. Lady Mary was asleep. Rosnah laid aside the chronicles of the court and turned to the more interesting matter of her last letter from Lord Kevin. The

## ROSNAH

boy wrote in the highest spirits. Everyone was well at Glencora. They were expecting every day to hear that she had found a good opportunity to tell the Fitzgeralds about his and Sheila's love affair and settle things somehow about their being married. Old Snuffy, as he dutifully called his father, was quite willing. Surely General Fitzgerald would not object. What a clever little girl she was to manage so well. Belle had four pups; the calf he had written of in his last letter was turning out to be a beauty. The geraniums on the south lawn had been gorgeous, but the rain yesterday beat them about like anything. What would she say to planting a cedar hedge, next year, between the greenhouses and the lawn? Some of the strawberries in the lower beds were beginning to fill out. Her father hadn't missed her yet. He had been away a great deal. A new floor was being laid in the carriage house, and he was her attached brother Kevin.

The girl leaned over and tossed this letter into the fire and watched, hands clasped under her chin, as it blazed and burned away. So that was her life! Those her interests! Glencora her real place in the world. Strawberries; pups; geraniums! A brother who got on so buoyantly without her and a father who had not even known that he *was* getting on without her. These were her own people!

And these others who had accepted her so warmly,

## ROSNAH

trusted her so perfectly, appealed to her so surely, were strangers. She was nothing to them nor they to her. Yet here was a father—of sorts—who regarded her with ever present pride and satisfaction. Here a quartette of brothers to whom her companionship was dear, her opinions important and her approbation of great value. And here a mother, a sweet and tender mother to love and be loved by; to pet and be petted by; who came trustingly to her daughter in all her little troubles and difficulties and between whom and all the disillusionings of the world the daughter stood sentinel.

And Sheila, the rightful, wilful Sheila, must soon be forced into her proper place. How would she like it? How would she fill it? How meet its myriad demands for tact and thoughtfulness and unselfishness? The counterfeit Sheila could see it all. Could see the self-willed, imperious little beauty in the rôle which must be relinquished to her and which she would play so badly. And such serious things were to be done! Owen to be watched; Lady Mary to be guarded; Lawrence and Adelaide to be encouraged. Gerald to be amused; the General to be listened to and Desmond to be—

The room had been perfectly quiet and no sound presaged the appearance of a small white note which dropped apparently out of the air, into Rosnah's lap. The events of the preceding evening had been enough

## ROSNAH

to strain the calmest nerves; the daylight was fading and the fire burning so low that Rosnah in no way contradicted Lawrence's high opinion of her when she started to her feet.

Ameera was behind her. The native woman's bare feet had carried her noiselessly across the room and she was making urgent signs that Lady Mary was not to be disturbed. She stooped to recover the note, handed it again to Rosnah and blew upon the embers in the grate. The girl dropped upon her knees and read by the dying flare of Kevin's letter:

"Say nothing to anyone, but come to my room at once. Desmond."

A glowing coal from the fire could not have produced a greater impression. Rosnah stared at the few clearly written words and then at the impassive Ameera, whose face was all distorted by her effort to keep up the radiance by which the girl read once more:

"Say nothing to anyone." Her throat swelled and her heart beat so heavily that she feared its clamor must awaken Lady Mary. "But come to my room at once." The fire failed completely. The room was in darkness except where the tall windows showed pearl gray in the black walls. Ameera crept to her mistress's feet and crouched there, patient, devoted, after the habit of many years, and Rosnah, with the

## ROSNAH

note tight clenched in her hand made her silent way to the door.

What could it mean? Had he discovered? What would he say? He, whose ideas of truth and honor and decorum were so proud and high! And if he did not know, if he wanted to talk to her quietly and free from interruption about some of the purposes they held in common, what then would he think of her when he did know? And some day, some near day, he would know. By what right could she obey this command? And what reason could she give for disobeying it?

She had opened the door and passed out into the hall, when suddenly the most overwhelming of her fears was set at rest. How stupid she had been. How easily frightened. Of course he did not know. The letter in itself proclaimed that. If he knew her to be Rosnah Creighton, he would burn his hand off before he would have written that command.

But he would know, he must know soon, and she must so order her conduct that, when she should have returned to the geraniums, the calf and the greenhouses, he could not say: "Here she fell short of dignity;" or "there she was less than lady;" could not feel that she had—by the very shading of a hair's breadth—overstepped the rules of strict propriety. He would never be able to say that her dissembling was for the sort of fun which was not very funny.

## ROSNAH

And this was no new resolve born of this latest situation. She had always known, even in school and nursery days, that she belonged to a race and to a position which imposed dignity and honor upon its women, even as it did upon its men. Even the eccentric Earl of Creighton, though notoriously given to wool-gathering and coin-collecting, was quite rational enough to know that his daughter was, as he expressed it, ten times more a man than her brother. But what excuse could she offer now? And how send it to Desmond?

Under the hall lamp she paused to read her letter once again. "At once," it said. And the door leading to the wing in which Gerald had established himself opened and that young boulevardier came out.

"So you're summoned too," he began as he came up to his sister. "I hope he put it more civilly to you. 'Say nothing to anyone, but come to my room at once. He writes to me. To *me!* Upon my word our legal relative gives himself insufferable airs," and as Rosnah laughed helplessly in sheer relief he added: "I'll not stand much more of his paternalism, and so I'll tell him."

**B**UT, once in Desmond's room, Gerald's warlike intentions abated somewhat. There was a sense of foreboding in the air and the three men already assembled looked serious, concerned. Desmond led Rosnah to the chair in the window, supplied her with cushions and a foot stool and then set forth his reason for intruding upon the leisure and attention of his audience. When he had closed his really masterly summing up of the case he turned to Rosnah.

"I asked you to be present, though affairs of this sort are generally left to men, because I thought it only fair that you should know the danger to which we all, more or less, shall be exposed and because I know you are brave enough to meet it with us. Now boys—and girl—what's to be done?"

"Get the women and the sick boy ready," Gerald answered instantly. "I'll answer for the Frenchmen. The Duc and de Tournelles will take Desroches; and you, Sheila, must take the Lady Mother off with you, somewhere, anywhere."

"Down to her sister, our Aunt Patricia," suggested Lawrence. "She'd love it."

"She'd go like a lamb," Owen supplemented: "She'll do anything she's asked, now that she **thinks** the Governor is safe."

## ROSNAH

"She might," Desmond acquiesced. "What do you say, Sheila?"

"That it would be infamous," she answered hotly. "She has spent all her life with him, sharing his dangers. I say that none of us has the right to judge for her. To trick her into cowardice now, after her long life of bravery and devotion."

"But, Sheila," Owen remonstrated with an eye on Desmond, which seemed to say that such outbreaks were only to be expected from hysterical girls, "you've done more than any of the rest of us to keep her happy and unsuspecting all this time. Why do you change now when you have a chance to finish the thing off so beautifully?"

"Yes," urged Lawrence, "why do you go and balk now? Gerald is right. This house, until we can do something about this thing, isn't goin' to be any place for women. Take her down to Glencora, there's a dear girl."

"I know," answered Rosnah, "I know I've deceived her about the country and the peasantry; but that couldn't do her any harm; that is very different from deceiving her about her husband! No one has a right to do that. Why don't you tell her the truth and let her deal with the General. After all she may be able to force him to listen to reason."

"If anyone else mentions Cooper to him," was Des-



## ROSNAH

mond's opinion, "he will probably go out and ask the fellow to spend a week or two with us."

"And why shouldn't he?" queried Gerald. "This is his house and he is entitled to ask whom he likes to it. We're only guests here. Why should we make such a fuss about it. I don't mind lunching with the chap. I'd lunch with the devil if the cooking were good."

"I'd lunch with the devil before I'd lunch with that man," cried Owen. "He is ten times more heartless than a real landlord would be—agents always are."

"Oh! spare us politics, *je vous prie*," drawled Gerald. "We perfectly understand that you will not be here. It will not be—as Desmond has pointed out—altogether safe."

Desmond and Rosnah moved involuntarily toward Owen, as Gerald finished speaking, and it was well that they were near enough to restrain him for, when it grew clear to his preoccupied mind that he was being insulted, he turned a livid face toward his tormentor. But Rosnah's hand was on his arm as he panted:

"What did he say? What *did* he say?"

"Nothing, dear, nothing," she answered. "Come over here and sit near me. You know more about these things than any of us, and we can't afford to misunderstand one another now."

Owen yielded to her quietly enough, but he had

## ROSNAH

not done with Gerald. "What did he say?" he repeated, "what did he mean?"

"Yes, Gerald, what did you mean?" said Desmond with so queer a look in his still eyes that Gerald answered:

"Only that Cooper will be unfortunate not to meet Owen."

"I say, you fellows," Lawrence broke in, "what do you want to go on like this for when something has to be done? How are we going to take care of Stormalong if he won't take care of himself?"

"Apply to the Castle or somewhere and get a brace of constables to take care of him," said Gerald, remembering his father's voice as he had repudiated this proposition some weeks earlier. "Especially if you have a grudge against constables."

"There are four of us," said Lawrence, "why can't we arrange that one or two of us will be with him always?"

"And there's Cagney," added Rosnah, "he can be trusted."

"Yes, Cagney is true," Owen granted, "but don't trust any of the other servants. I think I do know a little more about the affair than the rest of you." Rosnah and Desmond exchanged glances. "Going about among the people I hear more. And I may be able to lay hands on the men who are at the bottom of this and stop it altogether. In any event I feel

## ROSNAH

safe in promising you that there will be no serious crime committed unless the Governor does something rash. They will only threaten and hang about the place. And even the General, for all his boasting, couldn't be quite such a fool as to incite the already half-crazed, half-starved people to violence."

"Oh, couldn't he, though?" remarked Lawrence. "If he could get away from us! But if one or two of us was along with him we could easy enough insult that Cooper brute and keep him from havin' any talk or traffic with the Governor."

Owen was abroad again that night. He had decided—at whatever risk of rebuff—to appeal to The McCormac. He knew that the plans and hopes of that misanthrope could ill withstand a disturbance with its publicity, inspections and surveillance at this particular time.

All his preceding visits to the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty had taken place in the clear light of day or early evening, and he was freshly impressed by the weird, unnatural air of his surroundings as he made his way through the dark woods and the hardly brighter garden. He was climbing the terraced way to the house when he was stopped by a perfume rising clear above all the myriad sweetness of a garden on a quiet night—the unmistakable aroma of a remarkably good cigar. As he halted, puzzled, his host's voice saluted him:

## ROSNAH

"You? So late? And yet of course it could be no one else, the Little Old Woman of Threadneedle Street could not hire one of the villagers to come to this place at night." And The McCormac advanced out of the shadows of the big hall and shook hands with Owen. "Shall we take a turn?" he asked, "or would you prefer to sit down? Here's a bench."

Owen's first impulse was to express his astonishment at finding The McCormac up and walking about; his second, to suppress it, but The McCormac leaned back and went on conversationally:

"The place is supposed to be haunted—I'm the ghost. And so I am able without interference, to take the necessary amount of exercise. You are an exception to so many of my rules that I don't mind you knowing that I can walk as well as any man, and fence better than many. Every night my servant—a most interesting chap with a most interesting history—and I fence in the dining room. An inquisitive, half-witted fellow crept up here one night, years ago, to see what was going on, and he saw us at it. That finished the village."

"As well it might," Owen agreed.

"But you, lad," The McCormac resumed, "you came for no such purpose. Is there fresh trouble to report?"

"My father has announced, in spite of remonstrance from every quarter, his intention of asking

## ROSNAH

that man Cooper to lunch upon the earliest opportunity. He frankly acknowledges that he doesn't care for the fellow and he is doing this only to prove how little he cares for public opinion."

"He's a fool," said The McCormac hotly. "Is there no one for whose opinion he does care?"

"No one," answered Owen. "We hoped that Desmond might have some influence, but no, his mind is quite made up."

"Has any one told him the result which may follow such a course of action?"

"Every one has, even Cagney, his old soldier servant, told me that he had tried, but the result is always the same."

"Then," said The McCormac, "I shall warn him. You will understand with what reluctance I shall reappear in the world on such an errand, but the issues at stake are too great! The harm he may do is too great to allow of any personal consideration on my part. Tell General Fitzgerald, if you please, that I shall call upon him at half after four to-morrow afternoon."

Owen went home elated and confident. Now, at last, the General would be forced to reasonableness—now, at last, he would meet arguments and eloquence from which there could be no appeal. In his relief his thoughts turned to his other friend—Miss Judy. He went back to Avonmere, wrote a few rapid

## ROSNAH

lines and then fared on again to the little green door in the limestone wall. Under it he slipped an earnest request that Miss Judith McMahon would come to Avoninere to-morrow to consult with Lady Mary about a matter relating to the village, much and recently discussed by them. "Mother sends her love," the letter ended, "and urges that you will not be later than half past four."

## XLIV

**E**ARLY the next morning the village was shaken from its apathy by the appearance of a monster vehicle, half coach of state and half barouche, which came bowling along the road from Dublin and turned in at the long-disused gate of the "Childer's Ould Gintleman." It was drawn by a pair of giant horses, a pair of giant servants sat upon the box. Sounds of crashing undergrowth, plunging horses and of wood chopping floated upon the still air for some time after its disappearance. The villagers, kindly souls, gathered to hear the crack of The McCormac's rifle and to receive such remains of the gorgeous equipage and large servants as might escape to the road. But the rifle was silent, nothing came forth to reward their watch, and they retired to their cabins pleasantly assured that their

## ROSNAH

benefactor was dead and that the carriage had borne a medical man to his bedside.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the village rocked upon its foundations. The carriage came smoothly down the drive, and in it—gracious, handsome, but unsmiling—was “The Gentleman Who Never Got Up” with Biddy O'Rourke beside him!

Upon the smooth lawn of Avonmere among the flower beds and garden chairs and under the sycamore trees sat Lady Mary, her lovely daughter, and her timid guest. For Miss McMahon, removed from her garden, was always conscious of such lapses from the prevailing fashion as a coal-scuttle bonnet, thread mitts, and white cotton stockings worn with low-strapped shoes. Owen had taken her through the gardens and greenhouses. He had insisted upon her pinning a great bunch of tea roses in her dress, and had gathered others in such profusion that her arms were full of them when she returned to the sycamore tree. Presently the sound of wheels came faintly upon their listening ears and Owen went in search of his father. For an instant Rosnah and Lady Mary, deeply involved and interested in Owen's plot, also contemplated flight; there was such a look of perfect trust and kindness in the unsuspecting face framed by the black lace bonnet. And then astonishment held them motionless.

Through the sunshine and between the trees came

## ROSNAH

the ponderous, old-fashioned carriage. Its hood was thrown back, and in it there sat a handsome man of middle age, attired in a coat of gray satin with voluminous ruffles of old lace upon his breast. A high, black stock; a much-curved gray beaver hat; an eyeglass from which a wide black ribbon depended, and a pair of gray gloves completed what was visible of his costume; and at his side sat a little peasant girl with golden, wind-blown hair.

Stately and deliberate, he descended from his carriage with the aid of Tim O'Connell's arm and his gold-tasseled cane, disclosing long, well-turned legs in tight-fitting gray breeches and the two lower corners of a much-embroidered white silk waistcoat. A bunch of heavy seals dangled at his side.

Owen and the General were upon the steps, and when The McCormac had lifted out his small interpreter, a few courtly phrases of introduction and of greeting were exchanged. Then General Fitzgerald suggested that before retiring to the gun room to discuss politics, for at sight of The McCormac's face he had instantly abandoned all his fire-eating threatenings to turn him out unheard, they should join the ladies for a moment. General Fitzgerald was not in the conspiracy. He held romance and cock-roaches in much the same esteem and trampled upon either with the same enjoyment and self-righteousness. And he had not even noticed that a stranger was



## ROSNAH

with his wife and daughter until he turned to lead the way to the sycamore trees.

Owen was tall, but the newcomer towered above him. The General carried himself with soldierly uprightness, but the newcomer's flat back and straight shoulders were flat and straight with the easy grace which only much fencing and many ancestors impart.

Rosnah was so busy with these comparisons that she hardly noticed Miss Judith's little cry of amazement, nor the quick sympathy with which Lady Mary took and held her guest's hand. The three women rose in unison, and the General presented The McCormac to his wife and to his daughter. Lady Mary's kind voice bade the stranger welcome. Then she turned to her other guest. But Miss Judith, wide-eyed and overwhelmed, was moving back toward the largest of the trees. Her eyes never left The McCormac's face and her breath came fast. As she retreated the roses fell one by one, two by two, upon the grass until she had lost them all except the yellow ones on her breast. She folded her hands upon these; felt the steadying tree behind her; leaned against it for a helpless moment and shut her eyes. When she opened them again the tall, gray figure was coming to her over the path of her lost roses. And Biddy O'Rourke—Oh, Biddy O'Rourke, your usefulness is over! The "Childer's Ould Gintleman" needs no interpreter; the tactful Fitzgeralds are

## ROSNAH

drifting toward the house and you may as well go with them.

"And you will wait," asked The McCormac when she urged, for the tenth time, that the General was waiting, "until I have spoken to this mischief-maker? I shall see you again before I leave?"

"If you desire it," she answered.

"I desire it most eagerly and most humbly."

"I shall wait," she promised simply. And simply she went with him into the big house and into the big drawing room, where she remained to be petted and made much of by Rosnah and Lady Mary, while the gentlemen—and Miss O'Rourke—proceeded to the gun room and to a dissertation upon local and national affairs. Miss O'Rourke soon grew weary of these topics and wandered away to join her friend, Michael Dwyer Carey, whom she spied with Anna Maria among the bay trees. But The McCormac's eloquence swept on without her help; and his erudition, his high patriotism, his authoritative delivery, and his thrilling earnestness had their due effect even upon the General's skepticism and heartlessness. He would consider The McCormac's words, he temporized. Perhaps he had been misinformed. Perhaps distress did exist. Perhaps abuses did arise. He would investigate. In The McCormac's suave response there was no hint of his intense desire to strangle his pompous host, but Owen

## ROSNAH

breathed somewhat more freely when the interview had closed.

In the wide drawing room there were tea and conversation. Later there was a slight air of constraint. The visitors had most patently finished their visits, and yet Miss Judith lingered, and still The McCormac waited upon her pleasure. The tactful Fitzgeralds made more conversation. The General told involved and stupid Indian stories. Lady Mary urged more tea; another muffin; another slice of the Sally Lunn. And yet Miss Judith lingered and still The McCormac waited upon her pleasure.

And then a slight patter and a slight clatter drifted in from the avenue. The voices of the butler and the footman in subdued altercation replaced the clatter and, for the second time that afternoon, Miss Judith's self-control deserted her. Old John, apologetic but overborne, announced:

"A person, m'lady." And James Roach, the ancient servitor of the McMahons, stood revealed.

"O Miss Judy," he began plaintively, "I waited for you below the turn in the avenue according to orders until the midges had the little beast wild on me. I was in dread something maybe had happened to you, an' you off by yourself like this."

"There was no occasion for alarm," said Miss Judith.

"Well, you'll come with me now," he urged. "Do,

## ROSNAH

Miss Judy, there's a good child. The"—and here he paused, searching for a word. "The ——," he began again miserably, and then with happy inspiration and much mystery: "The little—you know what—I'm waitin' for ye."

Nemesis had found Miss Judith, and she rose to meet it as a lady and a McMahan should. The rest of the party moved with her and when The McCormac towered into view James, the faithful but blundering James, threw his palsied arms into the air.

"Ah, James, I am glad to see you, James," said The McCormac. "I remember you, my good man."

James' lips moved, but made no sound, and the entire party drifted out upon the steps. And there in the mellow sunset light was "the little you know what" with Tim O'Connell, standing guard over a most dejected and diminutive gray donkey. A little, two-wheeled cart it was; an old, old springless farm cart with a board placed across it for Miss Judith to sit upon; an armful of fresh straw thrown into it to protect Miss Judith's black strapped shoes.

Miss Judith's face was pitiful, but brave. The tactful Fitzgeralds were for once overcome and speechless. The McCormac stepped forward and offered his arm. Miss Judith, her eyes upon his, placed her little mittened hand upon it and tripped down the steps at his side. How often, in the old, old days, had he taken her to her carriage with that same air

## ROSNAH

of deference tinged with regret. How often had his hand steadied her as it did now when she stepped up to her place; how often had he stooped his courtly figure to arrange her draperies as now he arranged her flounced black skirt and adjusted the straw beneath her little slippers. A rumbling and a jingling of chains and wheels proclaimed the approach of The McCormac's state coach. He was leaving her again! Here, before servants and strangers, she must part from him. And, though her heart was breaking, her manners and her traditions held. Tim O'Connell sprang from the donkey's head. Miss Judith smiled serenely at the Fitzgeralds and turned to her cavalier.

"Are you going in my direction?" she asked, according to the kindly custom of the long ago. "May I set you down at your lodge gate?"

"I am going in your direction always," he answered. "And if you will take me with you, you may do with me as you will."

He took his long-ago place at her side. The amazed Fitzgeralds saw him trying to secrete his legs among the straw; saw their amazement reflected by the much-tried donkey when it was at last urged into action; saw the little cart roll down the avenue into the sunset glow, with James walking at the donkey's head, while Biddy, Michael Dwyer and Anna Maria circled ecstatically around the caval-

## ROSNAH

cade. The McCormac lifted his gray beaver hat to the amazed Fitzgeralds, and nodded a careless dismissal to the coach of state.

“’Pon my soul, this is a mad country,” snorted the General; “and we’ve spent an afternoon entertaining two of the maddest lunatics at large in it.”

“And yet ‘’Tis love, ’tis love,’” sang Rosnah “‘that makes the world go round.’”

## XLV

**T**HE younger Fitzgeralds expected great things from The McCormac’s visit. Here was proof which even the General could not question as to the gravity of the crisis to which affairs at Step-Aside had come. For some space after the departure of Miss Judith and her cavalier, Old Storm-along had stormed about the place in his accustomed manner. He had then ordered “Captain” to be saddled and had ridden off alone. None of his newly and self-appointed guardians followed. They thought that The McCormac had said the last word upon the Cooper matter.

But they had yet to learn the extent of the dear General’s courage. They were taught it at dinner that evening; a meal for which he was a little late and which passed off with more jollity and good feel-

ing than had animated the family board since Desmond's return from London. The servants were almost useless in their excitement about The McCormac's resurrection and their eagerness to escape to the village to discuss it. There was not one of them who did not know that the "Childer's Ould Gintleman" had come to take the part of the poor against Cooper. They knew, too, that Owen had arranged this seeming accidental meeting, and they rejoiced with all their romantic hearts at Miss Judy's restoration to happiness.

Old John, to whom The McCormac had entrusted his tassled cane, was so glorified and translated that he poured sherry into the claret glasses and answered the General's indignant remonstrance with a careless: "Oh, what's the differ?" And Tim O'Connell, whose arm had sustained the weight of The McCormac and who had closed the gun room door behind the tall gray figure, circled the table in three successive and uninterrupted careers with the egg sauce.

The General so perfectly understood and so little shared the happiness all about him that he with difficulty restrained himself until Rosnah and Lady Mary withdrew. He then looked up from his port and almonds to say:

"By the way, my friend—young Cooper—will lunch here to-morrow. There has been some hugger-

## ROSNAH

mugger about the matter on the part of members of my household and most unwarrantable interference on the part of an outsider who, if he had not been mad, I should have kicked out of my house, and I rode up to Cooper's place this evening and asked him. It may interest some of my solicitous sons, and the good-for-nothing abettor of one of them, to see how a gentleman of honor, and a soldier, answers attempted intimidation. I am told there is danger. I need only say that I shall quite understand the motive of any of you who fail to appear at luncheon tomorrow."

A heavy silence followed. The General had purposely chosen to make this announcement while the butler and footman were in the room, and no one spoke until these servants had withdrawn. Then Owen rose slowly and placed a trembling hand on his eldest brother's shoulder. The other men looked up at him as he spoke, and Desmond, whose greatest fears were awakened by that quivering hand, encircled its wrist with his own long finger and thumb.

"If you have chosen," began Owen very quietly, "to disregard all warning and advice; to oppose your ignorance and bigotry to the opinion of an entire countryside and an entire nation; to gratify your senseless pride in a courage which is only braggadocio and stupidity, then God forgive you and God help you." Here he paused for a moment shaken by



## ROSNAH

a fit of coughing, but when it had passed he went on: "You have exposed the two dearest women in the land to certain discomfort and possible danger. You have laid desolate and waste the happiness and peace for which your wife has waited all these years. But the man upon whom this thing will fall most horribly and heavily is the most faithful, the most devoted friend you or any other man ever had. For, whatever these poor outraged creatures may feel or do about us, they will have scant mercy and quick death for the man of their own class who refuses to obey the boycott order. You have deprived yourself and your household of every form of pleasure and intercourse which the district offers. And you have signed Cagney's death warrant. But all these things you knew—Desmond had told you—when you extended that invitation. I shall not be at your table to-morrow, nor, perhaps, ever again. I shall do what I can to protect you and my mother, but only in such a way and to such an extent as will not interfere with my duty to my country."

As the boy stopped, Desmond rose and steadied him with a careful hand. The General rose, too, his face dark and twitching.

"Your country," he flamed, "you canting, snivelling baby. Go to your — country. I wish her joy of you. And you of her."

## ROSNAH

"And I wish you joy," Owen replied, "of your conscience and your courage."

The General stormed off to the smoking room. Desmond led Owen upstairs. Gerald and Lawrence were left alone.

"*Mon dieu!*" said the one.

"Be the powers," sighed the other, and

"Shall we join the ladies?" they suggested in chorus.

## XLVI

**T**HE GENERAL, true to his boast and habit, left his dressing room at about seven o'clock on the next morning. As he reached the big hall it occurred to him that the house seemed dark and unnatural. Katy-parlor-maid was not on her knees polishing the stairs. Tim O'Connell was not ready to throw open the wide door and to wish his employer: "Fine morning, sorr." Old John was not beaming at the door of the breakfast room. All the doors were closed and, as the General performed the first part of Tim's office, the hall lamp flickered and went out. It was a plaintive, wet morning and the world of out of doors felt unaired, unprepared to the Anglo-Indian soldier. He would read his paper, he decided, at the breakfast room fire.

## ROSNAH

There was no paper. There was no fire in the breakfast room. The grate was gray and dusty. The chairs were ranged about the walls, and instead of white damask, gleaming silver dishes, sputtering tea urn and gay flowers, the table presented its afternoon aspect of green baize cover and a model of the Taj Mahal carved in pith and covered by a glass case.

General Fitzgerald glared about at the patient listlessness of the place and then stormed into the dining room determined upon no less than slaughter. Empty, too. Though here, indeed, the table was not bare. In contrast to the smaller room this one presented every sign of recent habitation. There were glasses, fruit, decanters and finger bowls upon the table and the chairs were all in disorder. The autocrat's first idea was that he had interrupted the servants in some incredible all night orgie. He glanced about—no one. Under the table—no one. And then something familiar in the setting of the scene was borne in upon him. This was where he had sat last night. Here the glass of wine he had not finished when that young idiot broke out into his tirade. This was the chair which the young fool had pushed out of his path as he stalked away. And what was that theatrical speech of his? "Then God help you and God forgive you." Here was Desmond's place. Here the places of the other fools and here, with its

## ROSNAH

cushion still awry was Mary's chair. The room had not been touched. The servants were not up. That was it. And the General went busily about, opening shutters, drawing curtains, and allowing the pale daylight to come in.

The General had never penetrated below the surface of things at Avonmere, but when he had rung all the bells a dozen times, and when he had a collection of torn down bell ropes to his credit, he determined to enact the role of Mohammed and to forage for that tea and toast which grew momentarily more essential to his continued existence. He wandered through dreary lengths of dark, dank passages, past ash pits, a perspiring laundry, a wine cellar with door locked and key removed, three mouldy shoes and a decrepit perambulator. Several rats, a thin cat, a jackdaw in a wicker cage and some blindly lurching toads were the only living things he met except the cockroaches which scurried about his feet and the spiders, whose loathsome webs clung to his face as he blundered, momentarily more angry and baffled, through these grewsome catacombs.

And when at last he reached the kitchen it was hardly more cheerful. The wide fireplace was full of grey ashes and the blight of hasty desertion lay upon everything. Unwashed plates upon the table; a discarded apron thrown among the pots and frying pans upon the hearth; an overturned teapot

## ROSNAH

lying in a brown puddle on the flagged floor. The General was puzzled. Full well he knew the signs of rout and flight; they were everywhere about him. They were upstairs in unaired, disordered hall and dining room. And he recognized them with a curious sinking of the heart.

But his old campaigning days stood him in good stead. He soon had a fire kindled in the fireplace and sat down before it to enjoy a cup of tea. The toast was understudied by a slab of indigestible looking potato bread—all he could find—but the General was reckless. The genial fire warmed his thin knees and the tea did a like internal service. He was quite his customary irascible self when at last he heard a footstep and turned to rend the laggard. But it was Lawrence, booted and spurred for an early ride, who emerged out of the shadows and who thoroughly reciprocated the surprise with which the General greeted him.

“What’s the meaning of this?” cried the father.

“Dashed if I know,” said the son. “There’s not a servant to be seen and the bells are all pulled out by the roots.”

“I pulled out the bells,” announced the General unabashed. “I’ve been up for five hours and I can’t find a servant. They must be dead. I hope they are.”



"His old campaigning days stood him in good stead."

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## ROSNAH

A certain gravity settled upon Lawrence's heavy features. "You haven't seen any one?" he asked.

"Not a soul."

"Nor heard anyone?"

"Not a sound. It's a most extraordinary country. Now in India—"

"Ah, well," said Lawrence philosophically, "I suppose we'll have to make the best of it. But it's a bad job. A very bad job. And as the father continued to consume tea and bread and butter without offering a share to the newcomer, Lawrence asked: "You know what's happened to you, don't you?"

"I've most probably taken my death in this tomb of a house, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, not at all. I mean the boycott."

"What boycott? Who's boycotted?"

"You."

The meaning and the horrid truth of this answer filtered into the mind of General Desmond Fitzgerald, C. B., F. C. S., F. G. S., etc., etc., as Lawrence repeated:

"You're boycotted, if you know what that means. That no one in the country will serve us—can serve us, in fact—without being shot for their pains. No one can speak to us without being themselves instantly boycotted. Our money would be refused in the village shops, our aid repudiated by the meanest beggar on the roadside. Our wells will be poisoned,



## ROSNAH

our cattle driven off, ourselves hated and persecuted."

At the end of this frank statement the General followed his son to the upper regions, where they came upon Rosnah and Desmond in the hall. Presently Gerald entered, yawning, in a flaming embroidered dressing gown and flopping slippers, to report that young Desroches, who had by that time been removed to the more congenial air of the studio, was awake and ready for his breakfast.

"Well," snapped the General, "I hope he may get it. But a man in your situation should be properly clothed. This is no time for fancy costume."

"My situation?" repeated Gerald.

"Yes," snapped his sire with sardonic promptness, "you're boycotted, and if you want anything to eat you will find those sleeves rather in the way of your cooking it."

A short silence followed this speech. Neither then nor at any other time did one of the young Fitzgeralds refer to the cause of the discomfort and danger in which they were involved. Rosnah was the first to speak:

"What are we to say to the Lady Mother?" she asked.

"Nothing," answered her father. "We shall do capitally. These servants were a worthless pack at

## ROSNAH

the best and I'll have an entire staff sent over from London in a day or two."

"An' he's fool enough to do it," whispered Lawrence in an aside to Rosnah. "The whole of them will be murdered if they come."

"Meanwhile I am too old a campaigner to object to a little wholesome and useful occupation. We shall do capitally with Ameera and Cagney. And, by the way now, where is Cagney?"

No one answered. And as the probable explanation forced itself upon him the General shrank visibly in his clothes. He would not have been more astounded, overwhelmed, by the news of his wife's defection.

"You see, sir," said Desmond gently, "this is a matter of life and death. Nothing less could force Cagney." But the General had passed bare-headed out into the rain.

"I'll bet anyone 17 to 0," said Lawrence, "that the old campaigner's wholesome and useful occupation will be ordering the whole of the rest of us about like bloomin' Tommies. I'll save him the first step by goin' back to take care of the fire."

"I'll help you," volunteered Rosnah.

"I'll go and talk sense to the Governor," announced Desmond. "There may be even yet some way of compromising."

"And I'll go back to poor Desroches," sighed

## ROSNAH

Gerald. "I think I'll go to bed again. This sort of a morning greeting makes a fellow devilish seedy, don't you know."

"No, you won't," laughed Rosnah. "You'll go up and amuse the Lady Mother until Ameera and I have her breakfast ready. Now do, Gerald, there's a dear boy. You can tell such wonderful tarriddles when you try."

## XLVII

**S**O WELL did Gerald execute his mission that the Lady Mother, bubbling with excitement and enthusiasm, was soon upon the scene. She found the General alone in the gun room: won him over to some show of spirit, and disregarding all his remonstrances, swept him down to the kitchen to see the fun. Gerald had assured her that Desmond had challenged Lawrence to an omelet.

So once again the General trod among the foundations of his house, but Lady Mary knew of a less devious path which led from pantry to kitchen with only a few draughty detours. And this was surely not the gloomy scene from which the General had so lately withdrawn. This was a bright and generous apartment with a fire place across one end and a mammoth table in the centre. Upon the wide hearth

## ROSNAH

stood all manner of plate warmers, roasters, turnspits and three-legged pots with griddles and gridirons of all sizes. Along one wall a shelf extended, and over it copper pots and pans of all shapes and capacities shone in the dim light. An open dresser full of "willow" ware, pewter and tin, was against the opposite wall. A fire was roaring up the wide chimney. Ameera was stirring something in a pot. Rosnah, with her dress pinned up to give free play to a bewildering combination of lace ruffle and buckled shoe, was flitting from table to dresser and back again. Desmond and Lawrence were perched among the copper pans offering inane suggestion and advice.

And wielding an enormous bellows, talking cheerful Hindustani to the *ayah* and cheerful Celtic-English to everyone, advising Rosnah, admonishing the young men, laughing with Ameera, Cagney reigned over the scene.

When he saw his master he saluted with what might have been a grin of pure enjoyment if it had not been surcharged with professional respect.

"I was just down at the stables, sir," he explained, "feedin' and watherin' the horses. I had to milk one of the cows, too, and I brought in some eggs from the hin house. We'll show that long-legged bosthoon of a Tim O'Connell an' that fool of a Pether Carey an' all the rest of them how much we care for their

## ROSNAH

tanthrums. They had the stables destroyed with their letter writin', bedad."

"Letters," faltered Lady Mary. "Why letters?"

"Yiss, letters as tall as a man, sayin' goodbye to his honor and your ladyship and thankin' ye for the little holiday you was givin' them. An'," added Cagney in a paroxysm of inspiration, "wishin' us all the best of good luck an' good health until they'd see us again."

"That was very kind of them, Cagney, but I must say it seems a curious custom, this, of their all going away together to make a pilgrimage to Knock."

"To Knock!" suggested the Fitzgeralds.

"Yes," beamed Lady Mary. "Dear Gerald told me all about it. I was quite touched and surprised by his interest and emotion, because I think that we all have thought him a little hard about questions of feeling or religion or poverty. And yet when he told me that, as my poor little godchild, Mary Carey, was not growing as quickly as she should, every servant on or about the place had gone with her to Knock—that holy well and shrine you know over in the County Mayo, to make the pilgrimage and to ask for a miracle, there were absolutely tears in his eyes."

There was a little stir among her listeners. A little quiver of relief and something akin to admiration. But Cagney was crushed, quite flat, as he returned to the bellows.

## ROSNAH

"Tears in his eyes, bedad," he sighed. "An' well he might have! Tears of joy an' pride! I'm an old wan an' I've travelled far, but I never heard the beat o' that. A pilgrimage to Knock! The saints preserve us."

"Now I propose," Rosnah was saying, "that we breakfast here. I've laid the table and there is no use in letting everything get cold in those dark passages. Will someone summon Gerald and the Duc and M. de Tournelles? We shall have tea and toast and boiled eggs. And afterwards Cagney will carry a tray to poor M. Desroches."

There never was a gayer meal. Everything was served directly from the fire by the soft treading Ameera or the creaking Cagney. There were laughter and joking in plenty, and when the conversation flagged some sophisticated member of the party was sure to remember those devout pilgrims and break into unexplained chuckles. Even Desmond was not proof against that amazing conceit, and the General was so delighted with it that he was nearly civil to Gerald on its account.

"I propose," said Lawrence, "that we lunch here, too. And wouldn't you like, Lady Mother, to ask the Duchess and Miss Adelaide up? I never saw such a jolly room! Do let's have them!"

But Gerald kicked him sharply, and his honest face grew blank as he realized that for the future

## ROSNAH

the sweetness of Adelaide's society would be denied to him.

"It would be very nice," said the placid Lady Mary. "Will you run down, dear, and ask them after breakfast?"

"Beggin' your pardon, me lady," Cagney interrupted, seeing an opportunity to retrieve some of his lost supremacy in the art of fiction; "beggin' *your* pardon, too, Mr. Lawrence, sir," he supplemented with a long wink, "but I met the young lady this mornin' an' says she to me: 'Cagney,' she says, 'Sergeant Cagney, will ye present me compliments to the family an' say that me an' Her Grace is goin' into the North for a day or two to visit Her Grace's mother-in-law.'"

"Now, that's a pity," said Lady Mary. "I really think they would have enjoyed this beautiful room."

"And the way to it," Gerald suggested, but the General interrupted:

"To-day we could hardly entertain them. I had meant to tell you, my dear, as I told the boys last night, that I've asked a young fellow to lunch."

"A nice young fellow?" cried Lady Mary. "I'm very glad. For I do think, Desmond my dear, that we ought to provide some nice young men for Sheila. Brothers are all very well in their way, but only in their way."

"But this—person—will not be of the romantic

## ROSNAH

sort. He's a poor devil, a bit down in his luck, who lives six or seven miles away across the valley," said the General.

"But a stranger," his wife pointed out, "would be surprised, even hurt, at this kind of entertainment. Don't you think, dear, that, considering all things, you had better put him off?"

No one spoke for a long moment in which every pair of eyes in the room save Ameera's and the Frenchmen's were fixed upon the General. And he answered each look in turn before he rose, shook himself together and answered:

"I can see no reason for recalling the invitation. And I shall expect you all to remember that Mr. Cooper is my guest and to treat him accordingly."

"I shall make him a *soufflé aux champignons*," cried Maxence de Tournelles. "A cloud, a sigh, a breath of a soufflé. Ah! I adore the cook!"

"Cooking," corrected Gerald, but as Gaston's eyes were fixed on Rosnah as she made toast with one hand while she shaded her face with the other it is possible that the Frenchman said better than he knew.

## XLVIII

**S**HORTLY after breakfast the little garrison was organized and assigned to its duties by the now recovering General. Lady Mary and



## ROSNAH

Ameera were put in charge of the sleeping quarters. Desmond and Rosnah were appointed to the commissariat department. Lawrence and Cagney were made responsible for the horses and other animals. Gerald was ordered to the cooking tents and the General appointed himself to the magazine.

The Duc and Maxence de Tournelles pleaded in vain to be allowed a share in Gerald's labors, but the General was inexorable. They were appointed to retire with the wounded and with the wounded they would be driven to the station as soon as arrangements for a retreat could be made. It was now plain to every one—save Lady Mary—that Avonmere was, as Lawrence phrased it, "a good place not to be in except for the family, and they'd be better off out of it." He conveyed this in purest, classic French to the Duc in the privacy of the coal pit, and managed to change that fire-eater's views on the desirability of sharing a boycott. Then, sending the noblemen to pack and to prepare the patient, he devoted himself to the problem of transportation.

Even the day grew kind and was waiting with a pale smile of sunshine to greet the castaways. Desmond and Rosnah, having explored meat safes and store rooms, wandered out into the kitchen garden in search of vegetables, seasoning and garnish, while Lawrence and Cagney set out for the stables discussing ways and means. They first metamorphosed the

## ROSNAH

wagonette into a comfortable ambulance by filling the space between the seats with cushions from all the other carriages; over these they spread blankets and carriage robes; they drew the curtains at the windows and turned to congratulate one another.

"He couldn't be more comfortable in his own bed," said Cagney, "and it will be the better for us in the times that are coming to be shut of the sick boy and his friends." Next they groomed Romulus and Remus, and it is probable that these far-travelled steeds had never undergone so vigorous a morning toilet.

"I think they'll do, sir," remarked Cagney at last, "and it's a pity that we are going to drive to the station by the back way, where nobody will see them. It would do Peter Carey—that lazy bosthoon—a lot of good to see how horses can be groomed. We'll just let the other ones stay as they are, except old Captain. I'll touch him up a bit when you're gone. It'll be like old days for the two of us, for many's the time I've groomed him. The General has rode him this fifteen year an' there's many the scratch of a bullet upon him. But we nearly lost him on the way home."

"Sea sick?" asked Lawrence

"Awful. Every day the General 'd go down between decks and spend hours heartening him up, and I always stopped with him at night. Devil as much as a sprig of hay would he eat, and the sweat pourin'

## ROSNAH

off him in pools. An' me lady above in the saloon havin' the same pleasin' experience with Ameera. 'Twas a grand trip we had entirely."

"Poor old Captain," said Lawrence, "he's in fine condition now, though."

"Well, if he wasn't we could shut up the shop. The General's wild about him, and Miss Sheila's as bad. Many's the time—"

"Good morning," said a cool voice in the region of the ceiling, "isn't it a typical Irish day, but it may be quite clear before luncheon."

"Good Heavens, Miss Lytton!" cried Lawrence, descriing the trim figure of that young lady on the box seat of the drag. "Good Heavens!" he repeated as he began to pull down his shirt sleeves and to struggle out of his apron and into his coat in one indescribable contortion.

"Don't bother to change," the cool voice went on. "You know I've seen the worst now, Mr. Fitzgerald. Good morning, Cagney."

"Good morning, miss," replied Cagney, saluting, and added: "How came you to be up there?"

"Yes," cried Lawrence, plunging his hands into a bucket and then, too late, beginning to look for a towel, "How did you get up there?"

"I climbed," she answered, as Cagney imperturbably dragged the dust cover off the phaeton and presented its corner to Lawrence. "Poor dear Ducky,"

## ROSNAH

she went on, "is on the verge of hysterics. She takes such a responsible interest in her tenants. I wonder what she'd do if she had a whole village instead of one house."

"Then she has heard about the boycott?" Lawrence asked, "and yet she lets you come here. It's not wise, but it's kind."

"She knows nothing about my comings and goings. I wanted to see how you were all getting on. Isn't it a lark? I didn't like to go up to the house, so I came here and waited. I knew someone"—with careful vagueness—"would be looking after the horses."

Lawrence was by this time in his usual costume, and Cagney, having pulled and brushed his fellow worker into what he considered perfection—much to Lawrence's embarrassment and Adelaide's amusement—disappeared in the direction of the stalls and discreetly failed to return.

Lawrence swung himself up to Adelaide's perch and breathed a sigh of deep contentment.

"O you darling, you darling," he said to her. "You needn't ever pretend again that you aren't fond of me. To think of your coming to share our trouble! Sure this is the very ecstasy of love. You'll live to be the loveliest woman in Galway yet."

"Trouble?" she laughed, quite ignoring the warmer part of his address. "How can you call it trouble?"

## ROSNAH

I've been dying to be boycotted ever since it got to be the fashion, but Ducky is so ridiculously popular that one had no chance of it with her. I hurried up here directly I heard about it. *Am* I in time for any of the fun?"

"Well, you've missed some of it," he admitted. "You missed seeing a general, retired, you know, drinking black tea out of a cracked cup before a smoking fire, in a draughty kitchen and swearing like one of his own troopers all the time."

"Ah! me, ah! me," she breathed.

"You missed seeing a renowned Q. C. and a French dancing master in a waddy dressing gown and floppy slippers wandering through a catacomb sort of place—only nastier and more cobwebby—looking for their breakfast."

"Oh, isn't it going to be grand!" she cried.

"I don't mind it so much now," he announced, "but when I thought that I'd not be able to see you or speak to you for the Lord only knows how many days, I could have killed that old fool of a father of mine."

"After that, of course, we should have been inseparable," she laughed.

"Stop making fun of me," he charged her, "and tell me once more who you expected to see comin' to take care of the horses."

"How should I expect anyone in particular?"

## ROSNAH

"But if you were to expect, who would you expect?"

"Your brother Gerald," she answered, greatly to his delight.

"An' now I can have you all to myself," he cried, "till it's time for me to drive Gerald's friends to the station; for be the powers, Miss Adelaide, I've come into my kingdom. You remember what I told you about the Governor's saying I was a groom? Well, I'll make him sorry he said it and glad it's true, before all is done."

"And I'll help you," promised Adelaide. "I don't think," and she wrinkled her pretty forehead in an effort of memory, "I don't think I ever gave a horse anything more nourishing than sugar, but you could teach me, couldn't you?"

"You'll begin your first lesson now," said he as he helped her down, and then the more serious aspect of the situation overwhelmed him. "My dear," he began very gravely, "it's as good as cutting the heart out of my body, but I'll have to take you back to your sister. You don't understand what is going on here, nor," he added grimly, "what's coming."

But Adelaide had forestalled this possible objection to her presence at the "Big House." She had announced her intention of visiting her boycotted friends to the parlor-maid and the cook of the Dower House, and she had thrown the same information at

## ROSNAH

old Jerry as she passed him in the avenue. So, as she pointed out to Lawrence, she was now under the ban, and to go back to the Dower House would be to involve the long suffering Duchess in the general predicament.

"So you'll have to keep me," she ended triumphantly, and Lawrence's brow cleared. "You must take me in and let me see the fun."

## XLIX

OLD CAPTAIN craned an inquisitive head over the door of his box-stall and greeted his physician with a genial whinny, while Lawrence accepted Adelaide's proffer of assistance more literally than she had meant it, and instructed her to dole out oats from the feed bin while he climbed into the loft and proceeded to throw down a small mountain of hay.

"But keep away from the last box on the right," he cautioned.

"What's in it?"

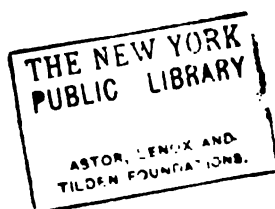
"The Devil," he made answer with entire conviction. "The Devil, with all his works and all his pomps. I bought him for a hunter and I was jolly well sold when I did."

"Oh, I *must* see his majesty," the girl protested.



“There now, steady now. No one's going to hurt you.”





## ROSNAH

"One hears, you know, so much about him." And before Lawrence could reach her side she was peering through heavy iron bars at a magnificent chestnut, a clear unspotted chestnut with a wild and wicked look. When the Devil's wicked brown eye caught the pair of cool blue eyes with which Adelaide regarded him, he, with all the strength of sixteen hands three inches of outrage, temper, bone and muscle, kicked that particular spot in the wall of his prison against which her soft body rested.

Not all her self-control could keep her calm. She fell back frankly terrified and Lawrence caught her in his arms. He carried her to the coach house and deposited her in the opportune ambulance and even through her fright and indignation she knew that never in all the routine of her life—in dancing, in greeting, in any contact which society prescribes—had she felt a touch like this. And she remembered her sister's warning.

"I'll shoot that beast," Lawrence raved. "He's well named The Devil. A wicked, treacherous devil he is. I'll shoot him now. I might as well as let him starve. None of the men would go near him for a ten pound note. I've had all the feeding of him and it's not much attention he'll get from me after trying to kill the loveliest woman in Galway. Oh, the villain, the unmitigated villain! I'll have his life."

## ROSNAH

Adelaide was surprised to see, as she looked up at him, that he was in deadly trembling earnest. And long after she had regained her poise he insisted she should stay in her nest.

"There now, steady now," he urged. "No one's going to hurt you. Whoa now, there now, we'll be quite comfy in no time. Quiet there. Steady there. When we're nice and cool we'll have a little water."

These admonitions, together with a purring sound, as of grooming, soon reduced the patient to a cheering state of limp laughter. So they went back to their duties. They watered the horses at a trough in the yard; they bandaged a swollen fetlock; they filled mangers. And at Adelaide's entreaty even the Devil was led out to drink. But before Lawrence would consent to such clemency he ushered Adelaide into an empty stall and locked her in securely.

Throughout these proceedings he kept up a continual courtship; now bucolic, now poetical, now humorous, now earnest, now laughing, now passionate. And each of these varied attacks she parried with an ease and surety which would have warned a wiser man. But who could be wise on a mild June morning when one is milking the placid cows; while one's lady fair, with skirts uppinned to show bewitching feet, is making a triumphant first attempt to feed the hens? Surely not the happy Lawrence, as he

## ROSNAH

blessed the renegade servants and sang with immense expression :

“Don’t say nay, charming Judy Flannagan,  
Only say you’ll be Mrs. Brannagan!”

“You will, you know,” he maintained. “And then you’ll be the loveliest woman in Galway.” And as they wended their way toward the house, he with a pail of milk in each hand and she with a basket of eggs upon her arm, he, for the hundredth time, sketched the gay life of Galway for her. The hunting, the shooting, the mad driving and the madder riding; Uncle Larry’s old castle beside the restless sea; the quaint peasantry still so foreign and un-Anglicized; the jolly young squires with their pretty young wives and, he extemporized, a month or so in London during the season. And always Adelaide moved through the picture as the loveliest woman of them all.

Miss Lytton was ecstatically welcomed and was of great service in preserving Lady Mary’s calm. Lady Mary and the General lunched in the breakfast room with Ameera and Cagney to wait upon them, while all the rest remained invisible in the lower regions. This arrangement was not to the General’s fancy, but there had been a determination in the surrounding faces when Desmond had announced it which warned the father that he was being offered

## ROSNAH

the alternative of that or mutiny. It had its due effect upon the General, and it did not improve his temper. It seemed impossible that so simple, so transient a thing as this little luncheon *a trios* could have caused in prospect such commotion, or could be followed by any serious consequences. It was over in less than two hours, and Lady Mary was back with her darlings, praising them, encouraging them and asking for the hundredth time if there were news of Owen.

"Of course there is," Lawrence answered, while the others were seeking some reassuring reply. "I don't think he will be back before to-morrow morning, if he is then. We met him when I was driving the Frenchmen to the station, and they asked him to go into town with them to help them about a hotel and a doctor. He was all for coming up here to see you, but I told him there wasn't time if they wanted to catch their train. So he's gone with them, ma'am, and they'll be all right now, don't you bother your dear old head about them."

"Don't bother your dear old head about anything," Desmond advised, "but come out into the garden and pick strawberries. That Cooper chap must have had an awful appetite. We have hardly a handful left for dinner." But the Lady Mother was not to be diverted from her General's side.

"I think," she explained, "that something is trou-

## ROSNAH

ling him; he seemed *distract* at luncheon time, and he spoke once of that eviction we all saw. He has a very tender heart," she sighed. "Anything about John O'Donnell affects him. You remember how cross he was for two weeks after the death of that poor old woman! People misjudge him very much when they think him hard and heartless."

So Desmond and Rosnah set out alone.

"Do you know," said he, surveying the strawberry beds through his supercilious eyeglass, "do you know, Sheila, I think that garden fellow has been swindling the Governor. As far as I can see the place produces nothing but hard green knobs."

"I don't agree with you at all," she cried. "I think it is wonderful. I found some parsley and some lettuce and some mustard and cress, and I know you ought to be able to find some strawberries in that far bed if you look for them."

"I couldn't see down there," Desmond protested, "it's too dark."

"Dark!" she marvelled. "At half past three on a sunny afternoon."

"Yes, dark," he repeated, "how could it help being dark so far away from the light?" Then Rosnah caught his meaning and laughed delightedly.

"Capital!" she applauded, "capital! You are getting on beautifully. If you will only talk like that to Lady Rosnah I shall be proud of you."

## ROSNAH

"I don't," said he, "feel the slightest desire to talk in any way whatever to the Lady Rosnah Creighton, and I am not," he went on, "I am not going away to the other end of the garden to leave you here alone. There might be snakes about; one never knows in these damp places."

"Oh, you Englishman! You Sassanach?" she laughed. "Don't you know there isn't a snake on the Island? Did no one ever teach you the poem about St. Patrick, beginning:

"There's not a mile of Ireland's Isle  
Where snakes and varmints musters,  
But there he put his neat fore foot  
And murdered them in clusters.'"

"That's all very well for a poem," said Desmond, removing a large slug from a small strawberry. "But you know I don't believe a word of it. And then if we lay aside the snakes——"

"By all means lay aside the snakes," she interrupted.

"—— there remain the dampness and cold. I want you to get up off the ground and come back to the house."

Rosnah accepted his assistance and prepared to obey him, when over the top of the hedge there appeared the respectable bowler hat of Mr. John Lovell,





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## ROSNAH

and from a gap in the same hedge there glared the observant eye of the same gentleman. He jumped over the stile and advanced upon them with a heart-rending disregard of bed or border.

Rosnah began to laugh and Desmond greeted him with a cordial:

"Keep back! Keep back, I say! You are not to come in here."

"Not to come in," echoed Lovell, in whom surprise and jealousy fought for mastery.

"No, you are not to come in," repeated Desmond, and announced with more resignation than he had expected to feel:

"We are boycotted, don't you know, and you will get the Duchess into no end of a scrape by even talking to us. This rule," he added, with a guarding eye upon his sister, "this rule extends to the whole family, and I am awfully sorry, Lovell, old chap, but it is useless your trying to talk to any of us."

"I know you are boycotted," answered Lovell, savagely, "but what's that to me! Miss Lytton is here and you can't expect me ——"

"I do expect you," his friend answered with a touching vicarious nobility, "I do expect you to do all in your power to protect the Duchess of Clontarf from any disturbance or annoyance. You know that if you are seen talking to any one of us the Duchess will come under the ban, and as I entertain a very

## ROSNAH

high regard for Her Grace, I shall protect her interests by wishing you a cordial and—a long—good morning. Come, Sheila.”

And Rosnah, with the front of her skirt full of lettuce, parsley and other garden products, bobbed a comic opera curtsey to Lovell and followed “her brother.”

So passed the day; merrily, busily, happily. But as twilight was drawing in Lawrence sought Adelaide once more, and he looked so serious that she asked in quick alarm:

“Bad news?”

“No news at all. But I’ve been thinking once again of you. As soon as it is dark I’m going to take you back to the Duchess.”

“I shan’t go.”

“Oh, yes, you will! I’ll take you. You see, last night ‘Old Stormalong’ only threatened to have that Cooper chap here. Now he has done it, and no one can tell what it may lead to. This is no place for anyone but the family. We have no right to bring outsiders into it. That’s what we all were saying in the gun room. So I’m going to take you home.”

But she was immovable. She and Rosnah had arranged to sleep together, and, inconsistently enough, to keep one another awake all night in anticipation of some disturbance. The argument in regard to the Duchess still held good. Nothing short of a com-

## ROSNAH

mand from Lady Mary would dislodge the guest. So Lawrence accepted defeat once more and led Adelaide up to the corridor, upon which the sleeping apartments opened. "This," he pointed out, "is Sheila's room. She nodded: "Yes, I knew." "And this," he went on, "three doors away, is Desmond's. If anything startles you in the night, which God forbid, call Desmond. He has more sense than the other two, although that's not saying much."

"But you?" queried Adelaide. "Where will you be?"

"The heart of me will be here on your threshold, acushla," he answered. "But the poor body of me will be where my duty is—in the stables. Those poor creatures can't be left alone, you know."

"But *you* will be alone—" she was beginning when he stopped her.

"I'll have Cagney. Would any one in this house be any good to me? Tell me that. And any way, they have the women to take care of. Oh, my father is right when he sneers and says: 'In all matters pertaining to the stables.' And mind. One thing more. You're not to tell any one about me. 'Tis a secret between us. Promise?"

"Yes."

"Honor bright?"

"Honor bright and shining," she answered, giving

## ROSNAH

him her hand. "But," she warned him, "I don't like it at all, at all."

"I'm not in love with it, either," he admitted, and finding himself miraculously returned to his subject he went on quickly: "But I *am* in love with you, though. I've loved you for years and I've loved you forever. Oh, do be the loveliest woman in Galway."

### L

**T**HE unwonted labors of that initial boycotted day had a marked influence upon bedtime and upon the first deep sleep which followed it. There was to be a late full moon that night, but no one cared to wait for it, and at ten o'clock darkness and rest had settled upon Avonmere.

An hour or so later Adelaide turned, yawned, and opened her eyes. She saw with a momentary gasp of horror that a dark figure was bending over the still sleeping Rosnah. But an eager voice whispering: "Missy Sahib, O Missy Sahib," reassured her.

The night was very still. A little waterfall far away in the park sounded loud and near. But the *ayah* was cautioning them to listen, and the two girls, slipping into dressing gowns, crouched in the window seat. Faintly a new sound rose above the fall of the water and when Adelaide distinguished

## ROSNAH

that it came from the direction of the stable she began to struggle into a variety of motley garments in breathless hurry. She was dressed—in a way—and at the window again, when a wild group of horsemen galloped up the avenue. The moon showed seven horses and six yelling riders. Before the big doors of Avonmere the cavalcade halted for an instant, a shot rang out, the seventh horse leaped into the air with a shrill and horrible scream and then crashed backwards while the riders, with shouts of defiance, swept down the avenue.

Adelaide and the General reached the door at almost the same instant and the lights from the hall lamps shone out upon the gallant old Captain, shot through the neck and dying, but still greeting his master with a loving eye. And again there came the sound of hoofs upon the avenue; but madder, wilder, faster. Out of the shadow beyond the sycamores shot a giant horse. Out into the moonlight sprang The Devil. Into the shadow of the maples shot a giant horse; straight and sure down the avenue sped The Devil. And that flash of moonlight showed that a rider crouched low upon his neck.

Presently the other members of the party joined Adelaide and the General. And they knew that Captain's course was run. That the great sobs which shook him could end in but one way. Desmond tore off his coat and spread it under the handsome old

## ROSNAH

head, but the General knelt upon the coat and held the head upon his knee. Thus they waited for the end. And again the little waterfall sounded clear in Adelaide's ears and the quick rush of The Devil's hoofs passed away into the silence. And even in the moonlight it was plain that now, at last and very late, the General understood. He laid his old friend's head on Desmond's coat, straightened the slim legs and smoothed the short mane.

Suddenly Adelaide broke from Rosnah's side and threw herself upon the General:

"Get up," she cried, "get up. There's more to do. Bring whiskey, bandages, everything you'll want for a wounded man and come to the stables. Lawrence and Cagney were both with the horses. One of them rode by. Where's the other? Quick, get the things. And lights, I tell you. Follow me. I'll find him for you."

While the little garrison retreated to the house to obey her orders, she turned to the stables and sped down the dark avenue like a moth. The pace would have left many a country girl breathless and panting, but Adelaide was accustomed to long nights of dancing on her high-heeled feet, and her breath came steady and strong as she ran forward.

Presently the stables loomed dark and huge before her. The moonlight showed the door of the coach house as a darker patch of the darkness. There was



"The General . . . held the head upon his knee."



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## ROSTNAH

not a sign of life, not even the barking of a dog, in this place which had always been so noisy.

With a little catch of her breath, caused not by fatigue, but by fear, the girl ran up the inclined approach and stood in the ghostly carriage house. Linen swathed mammoths were all about her; squares of moonlight fell upon them and upon the floor, through the high windows and the door, while the entrance to the stalls yawned open; black, silent, empty. Now God be thanked for that morning's frolic! She knew her way about the stables! And she knew that what she was looking for—what she feared—would be near Captain's stall.

And in the darkness just outside it she came upon what she sought, and not, dear God in Heaven! what she feared; for her first touch of the quiet body told her that this was not death, not Lawrence. This was Cagney, unconscious, but alive. She tried to raise him; she passed her hands rapidly over him in search of wound or bleeding, and then sank to the ground with a cry, drawing his limp body—face downward—across her knees. It seemed an age before she heard the sound of voices and saw the welcome flash of lanterns. But in truth the Fitzgeralds had been wonderfully quick in gathering together such simple remedies as could be found and in bringing a cot from the servants' quarters to serve as a stretcher.

By the General's command Desmond had remained to guard the women and the house, while Gerald and his father followed Adelaide with what speed they might.

"This way," her voice hailed them as they entered the coach house, "and, oh, come quickly; it's Cagney—he's alive, but I'm afraid he is very much hurt—there is a knife between his shoulder blades and he is quite unconscious."

Very carefully and tenderly the men took her burden from her and laid it upon the improvised litter, and very slowly they set out for the house, postponing, until they returned to better light, hot water, Ameera and a comfortable bed, the withdrawal of the knife. The lantern's light showed it to be one of the General's favorite game carvers with his crest winking brightly on the band which encircled its ivory handle.

Adelaide walked by Cagney's side; the General was at his head and Gerald at his feet, and frequently the little cavalcade was obliged to stop for rest.

There was now no trace of affectation about Gerald, and he trudged on uncomplainingly under a burden far beyond his strength, and Adelaide found time to wonder at him. Their last rest was at the foot of the steps, where they found the household waiting for them.

## ROSNAH

"It's a bad business," panted the General. "Send someone for the medical man."

For a moment or two no one spoke, and then Desmond said:

"I should go gladly, sir, it would be nothing of a walk across the fields, but I fear it will be quite useless—Doctor O'Connor could not come here, you know." And in the quiet moonlight the General turned from one to the other of his two oldest friends—Cagney wounded and Captain dead.

## LI

**A** HUNDRED times during the succeeding hours Adelaide reversed Mary Worthington's verdict upon being boycotted. They were the most miserable hours which the spoiled Miss Lytton had ever endured. She was keenly anxious about Lawrence and she drew general disapprobation upon herself when she confessed that she had known of his intention to watch with Cagney in the stables, and had failed to inform the others. Miss Lytton was not accustomed to disapprobation. Neither was she accustomed to the sense, growing momentarily more oppressive, of being very much of an intruder. Everyone else was busy with the unearthly alertness which comes at three o'clock in the morning.

## ROSNAH

Cagney was as comfortable as circumstances and the gravity of his injury would allow. The General watched him and tended him with unceasing vigilance and Lady Mary watched the General, who was suffering agonies of alternate rage and sorrow. Ameera was, as Gerald frequently assured her, worth ten of the absconding staff; without her help and that of Lady Mary things would have gone very badly for the wounded man. Desmond and Rosnah bolted and barricaded doors and windows as best they could. Gerald penetrated to the kitchen, an expedition which Adelaide vehemently declined to share, and carried up the essentials for brewing tea and hot punch, which refreshments he prepared over a sulky fire in the breakfast room.

And still there was no sign of Lawrence. Adelaide wandered from window to window straining eyes and ears. But the falling water was the only sound which disturbed the perfect silence, and nothing moved save the slow moon in the heavens and the slow shadows of quiet trees lengthening upon the lawn. There was nothing—but waiting—for Adelaide to do. And yet Ameera, observing everything with inscrutable eyes, saw that this stranger, Missy Sahib, stood more in want of help and comfort than did any of the others. The native guessed what Adelaide herself did not know, and she lent her quick half-savage senses to the service which has been women's

## ROSNAH

since the world began—waiting and watching for the man.

The shadows stretched further upon the lawn. They crossed the sweep of gravel before the door and fell gently about what they found there. The waterfall still sounded from the park and far away a cock crew. Gerald's sulky fire had long ago gone out. The watchers were spent and very weary.

"We shall retire now," the General commanded. "I shall be in my dressing room with Cagney. There is no use in staying up for Lawrence. If he meant to return he would be here now. He is probably waiting for the morning."

"But before we separate," said Lady Mary quietly, "I should like to be told how long this boycott is likely to last."

"Boycott?" laughed Gerald, her official comforter, with a weird gaiety, "what put boycott into your blessed old head?"

"I knew it before Mr. Cooper had been ten minutes in the house," she answered, "and I have expected it for weeks. If it were not for Cagney and poor Captain I shouldn't mind it at all, for really," said the gentle Lady Mary, "a little excitement is a God-send in this very quiet place."

"Quiet?" echoed Rosnah. Everyone else was speechless.

"Well, my dear," her mother responded, "it has

## ROSNAH

appeared quiet after the activity of India. However, your dear father is right. Bed is the best place for us all now. Desmond, my boy, will you go to the gun room and get me six more cartridges for my revolver?" and she drew from her pocket a wicked looking combination of steel and silver and mother-of-pearl which Adelaide regarded with terror.

"I carried it all through the mutiny," explained the Lady Mother, "and I got it out this morning. Ameera has hers, too. Have you not, Ameera?" And the native woman drew from the folds of her *sari* the duplicate of her mem Sahib's weapon.

"My dear mother," exclaimed Gerald as he kissed her, "you are the most surprising woman in the world."

"Nonsense, dear," she answered. "But it's as well to be prepared. And, by the way, I want to congratulate you upon that pilgrimage to Knock! I nearly believed you."

Presently only Ameera moved about the shadow-haunted stairs and halls. She had been appointed to keep the first watch and to report any sound or movement instantly to the General.

And yet when, very early in the morning, she had a report to make it was not at the General's door she stopped; it was not the General's hand she took; it was not the General whom she cautioned to perfect silence.

## ROSNAH

And surely it was not the General whom she hastily invested in a matinee which seemed part of the pink and misty beauty stealing over the sky; and it was not likely that the General's hands would have trembled so as to make him quite helpless about two heavy braids of yellow hair and quite resigned at last to let them hang, two ropes of twisted gold, among the lace and silken softness of the matinee.

When all was ready Ameera led Adelaide to the window, whence they looked down upon the dead Captain and upon the man who stood at his head. Ameera pointed to the summer house. And to each post of it an exhausted horse was tied by the bridle. Seven horses with hanging heads and nervous, twitching tails. And The Devil towered among them more chastened than all the rest.

Ameera slipped away and Adelaide's eyes returned to Lawrence. Absolutely motionless he stood in the pale soft dawn. Very tall and slim he looked and very strong. And as she watched, he raised his eyes to her window.

He did not move or speak, and yet she, the sophisticated Miss Lytton, went to him without doubt or falter. And as she slipped through the big door so discreetly held ajar by Ameera, the sun wheeled up beyond the trees.



## ROSNAH

### LII

**L**AURENCE and Adelaide were the only happy things about Avonmere on the second day of the boycott, and even their transports were quieted and silenced by the burial of Captain and by the very grave condition in which the morning found Cagney. Neither the General's sons nor Rosnah could decide whether he suffered most from grief or from remorse, but his emotion, whatever it may have been, took the form of a thunderous silence, broken by occasional outbursts of violence and profanity, so that he was not an ideal companion for anyone but the delirious Cagney. He stormed and raged for a doctor, but Lawrence told him that, having seen Cagney stabbed by the wretches who stole Captain, he had stopped at Doctor O'Connor's on his way home in the early morning, and that the doctor had firmly but regretfully declined to visit Avonmere.

It was, therefore, with some amazement that the younger Fitzgeralds tumbled up from the kitchen regions at about eleven o'clock in answer to their mother's excited warning that a dog-cart was coming up the drive. They were in time to see that it was driven by a large woman, a very drum-major of a woman, and that Doctor O'Connor cowered on the seat beside her, with his professional black bag across his knees. The woman was a stranger to the Fitz-

## ROSNAH

geralds, and as Lawrence went to the horse's head and Desmond assisted the guest to alight, she turned to Lady Mary and took her hand.

"I have come to apologize for my people," said she. "I have brought the doctor to do what he can for the wounded man. I should be grateful if someone would tell General Fitzgerald that Mrs. Plunkett of Mount Eagle is here and wants a word with him. Ah! Miss Lytton, your sister is in a nice condition of mind about you. This is the young man, I suppose," and she held out her hand to Lawrence. "Well, I congratulate you; both of you. Come Doctor—out you get—in you go. One of these gentlemen will take you to your patient."

"Allow me," said Lady Mary, with her unfailing courtesy. "My dear Doctor O'Connor, it is such a pleasure to see you."

Mrs. Plunkett was attired in a riding habit whose skirt had been forcibly and unsuccessfully altered to walking length, a high and uncomfortable linen collar and a grey felt hat of the design known to connoisseurs as the billycock. She was standing before the fireplace of the big hall with her hands in her pockets when the General appeared, suave, courteous and gallant, according to his manner with ladies fortunate enough to be not of his household. "My dear madam," he began, "this is a most kind—"

"So you are General Fitzgerald," Mrs. Plunkett

## ROSNAH

greeted him, her hands still in her pockets. "Well, sir, I hope you are pleased with yourself."

"My dear madam," he began again, somewhat nonplussed—

"Well, go on; what have you to say for yourself?" she asked. "This village was perfectly quiet when I left it; it was a credit to all of us who are interested in it; it held steady and firm when this boycott nonsense was going on all about; and you, sir, to gratify your conceit, to show your contempt for a force against which you have as much chance as a fly on a waterfall; you, who know as little about your countrymen and care as little about them as though they were Hottentots and you an Esquimaux, have brought about this condition of things. I returned from Wexford yesterday afternoon and I have been hearing about you ever since. There isn't another soul in the county who could come near you. Doctor O'Connor would not have ventured except that I dragged him, and it's all your doing,—you wicked, bad-tempered bully."

"My dear madam," the General began for the third time, and his shaven gill was very red and the eye which he cast upon his assembled children condemned them to banishment as plainly as any words could have done. But neither look nor word could have dislodged his victims when they understood that now and at last someone had undertaken to express

## ROSNAH

their own pent-up feelings. Mrs. Plunkett turned to study them with an appraising and an approving glance. She had plainly no quarrel with the younger generation, but she presently wheeled again upon the General:

"I wonder how long they will put up with you," she remarked in her large, deep-throated voice. "You have driven away the best of them, the young fellow who worked the greatest miracle that Step Aside has ever seen—the resurrection of The McCormac and the happiness of Judith McMahon. And *you* dared to defy The McCormac. If you had stayed here and devoted yourself to your country instead of going off to kill people who had never done you any harm and who had as much right to live in their homes as you had to burn them, then maybe you'd know how much you were honored when The McCormac entered your house. 'Twas an unfortunate thing that I was obliged by—" here she halted, caught Adelaide's eye and ended, "circumstances—to be away for the last six weeks. But I am back now, and I have come to tell you that it will be a bad thing for you if I hear any more of your nonsense. I suppose I will have to bring the doctor up every day until that sick man is well—I am going up now to look at him—and I'll keep my eye on you. You don't deserve those lovely children nor that sweet

## ROSNAH

wife of yours. Now," sighed Mrs. Plunkett, "I have said my say and I feel very much better for it."

This interview cannot have been said to improve the General's condition, but the thought of it supported his children through the weariness and discouragement of a second day of ostracism, and even the General could not deny that Doctor O'Connor knew his business.

Before driving away Mrs. Plunkett had turned to Lawrence:

"If you will lead all the horses to the south gate I shall meet them there with a handful of grooms and take them to Mount Eagle until things are a little more settled here. This invitation," she laughed, "does not include The Devil. Not one of my boys would go near him, and he will be safe enough where he is. He is his own best watch dog. And, besides, you ought to have some way of reaching help if anything should occur. Not that I expect anything, mind you. I'll give strict orders that there is to be no more nonsense in the village, and I should advise that there be no more of it here. I'd take that sick man with me if he were well enough to be moved. But he is not. Goodbye to you all. God bless you."

Again the household retired early; again the moon rose late; and again Ameera went to Rosnah's room and forced a sleepy girl to rise and dress. But this was no toilette of lace and ribbons. There were

## ROSNAH

strong boots on Rosnah's feet, a dark little hat on her head, and a dark cloak all about her when Ameera led her to the terrace door and resigned her to the care of Moira Keegan.

"Moira!" exclaimed Rosnah, when she recognized the girl. "You here? Don't you know?—" then suddenly she asked, remembering her last conversation with this girl, "Is it about Owen?"

"Yes," answered Moira miserably, "it is, and you were right, but it is very much worse than we guessed. Several of the boys in the village knew what Mr. Fitzgerald has been doing, but they were afraid to let me know because I had told them to take care of him."

"And what is he doing?" questioned Rosnah.

But Moira only answered: "You'll see. I'll show you." and led the way down the broad avenue.

It was, as Rosnah had noticed as she crossed the hall, a quarter to twelve, and the moonlight showed her the agony in Moira's face as clearly as she could feel the trembling of her hand. The girls soon left the avenue and Moira led the way straight through the park; straight through thicket and shrubbery; through field and young plantation; sometimes even through a hedge. They climbed a loose stone wall at last and found themselves in a part of the estate which was quite strange to Rosnah. It had evidently been at one time a pasture or a paddock, for

## ROSNAH

a wildy overgrown holly hedge still enclosed three sides of it. The fourth was bounded by a little wood, and there, among the trees, Rosnah crouched beside her guide and looked out into the open field. A river ran between the wood and the field and from it wraiths of mist were rising, so that at first Rosnah distinguished nothing except the fantastic arms of the holly trees outlined against the sky.

Then Moira cautioned her to even greater quietude. And through the mist the girls saw the figure of a man come marching up the field with a steady, measured swing. Behind him came a line of men, fifteen or twenty abreast, and behind them again other lines, all marching, grim and silent, after their leader. And then the mist cleared for a moment; long enough to show Rosnah that Owen was the leader; that he was armed; that all his followers carried carbines and cartridge belts. At the edge of the little river he stopped and faced his men, and the drill began. The obedience was so instant and so exact that the girls knew, with a great sinking of the heart, that many hours had gone to its perfection; that Owen was embarked upon one of those helpless insurrections; those weak, unsupported up-flarings of spirit and desperation which lead so many of Ireland's sons to death and banishment. Owen's little address, when the drill was over, would have told them in any case. It was plain to see that the

## ROSNAH

men idolized him. It was plain to see and hear the reason. Looking at him, at his grace, his vigor and his weakness, one could understand the power of Bonny Prince Charlie and the love in the old border song:

“Follow thee, follow thee!  
Who would nae follow thee!”

He bade a fair and grave good night to the men and boys. So many of them, Rosnah saw, were as young as their young leader; and if she had been capable of another throb of dismay she would have felt it when she recognized the young Lord Eric looking, with his wide white collar and his little bob-tail coat, strangely out of harmony with his associates. His place was between a frieze clad peasant and Tim O'Connell in full livery.

When the rank and file had disappeared like so many wraiths into the darkness, a lad who had waited later than the others approached Owen. The girls heard the quiet conversation: “Is he no better? Did you give him the medicine? Well, I can go and sit with him if that is what he wants, but I am afraid neither you nor I, Mattie, can do much more for him than that.” And as he turned with the boy in the direction of the village, Moira heard him say: “And Miss Keegan is out, you say? She is with old Mrs. Kinsella most likely.”



## ROSNAH

The two girls lay quietly in the wood until the last sound of retreating footsteps had died away. Then each turned to the other and found herself looking at a ghastly face.

"Oh, send him away! Send him away!" cried Moira

"Ah, but can we now?" asked Rosnah. "It may be too late."

## LIII

**W**HILE the girls were still struggling through the underbrush and hedges, the moon heartlessly deserted them, and before they reached the avenue a fitful rain had begun to fall.

"You won't want me now," said Moira when she felt the gravel beneath her feet, "you can get up to the house without any trouble, and I'll go to the village and see if I can overtake any of those boys. Oh! it was bad of them not to tell me what was going on! And I asked them so often and warned them so often, and look what's come of it all. Believe me, Miss Fitzgerald," she went on as Rosnah took her hand in parting, "there's nothing to do—there is no way that you can stop him, except by getting him out of the country. I may be able to stop this one thing—I doubt even that—but he will only get into trou-

## ROSNAH

ble after trouble, and they'll break his heart in the end."

Rosnah watched her until she had disappeared in the darkness, and then turned in the direction of the house. Such a long and danger-haunted way! The events of the last hour coupled with the experience of the preceding night, and coming upon nerves already worn and jangled by the anxieties and evasions of all the weeks since she had left Glencora, were enough to try any nerves, and Rosnah could hardly refrain from running after Moira or from calling for her assistance.

Mrs. Plunkett's promise of immunity, her own self-reliant spirit, the knowledge that the boycotters' antagonism was directed only against the General, were all sustaining enough and comforting enough when one was in the house and could recount these safeguards with Adelaide or Lady Mary; but out here in the dark and the rain, half a mile at least from help, they seemed but poor barriers against the terrors of the night. There was a rustle in the shrubbery beside her! Only the rain pattering on the leaves. Something moved in the tree above her! Only an owl smoothing its feathers against the rain, and as Rosnah timorously set out upon her journey, she wondered for the hundredth time whether the game was worth the candle. It was getting to be more than game—death, violence and hard, ill-feeling

## ROSNAH

were not what she had expected when she set out from far Kilgoggan. Surely, as Desmond had said, the fun which resulted from masquerade was not so very funny.

Meanwhile Adelaide Lytton, having rosy memories and hopes to occupy her, slept but lightly and was awakened by the sonorous clock in the hall striking twelve. She turned to Rosnah's place and found that it was empty. For a while she lay still thinking that Rosnah had gone to reconnoitre; she had seemed restless all through the evening. But as the minutes passed and she did not return, Adelaide slipped into dressing gown and slippers and began to do a little investigating on her own account. She lit the candle and surveyed the room, and immediately she knew that it was not in the order in which she had seen it last. Across the foot of the bed was a long white garment which she shook out and recognized as Rosnah's night dress. The door of the wardrobe stood open and the blue ribbon which Rosnah had worn, snood fashion, to keep her heavy braids in place, was lying on the floor.

She passed out into the corridor. Perfect quiet, save for the rhythmical rise and fall of General Fitzgerald's snoring. Down in the hall she found Ameera crouched before the dying fire, and from her elicited the information that Missy Sahib had dressed and gone out about an hour ago. But no

## ROSNAH

hint of Moira Keegan did Ameera give, for she knew : by instinct, perhaps, or, perhaps, from something she had overheard in the servants' hall ; that there was some connection between that pretty lady and her own Owen *baba*.

Adelaide, sitting upon the arm of a chair with her feet on the fender, came to the conclusion that she would bear no more secrets alone. Her experience of the previous night had shown her the disadvantage of such a course. Her first impulse was toward Lawrence, but she checked it by the thought that he would certainly dash out into the darkness and almost as certainly be killed. It was not yet time for measures so extreme. Nor was it yet a matter for the General's bull-dog tactics. Desmond was the one to be told. He would know what to do. And had not Lawrence said: "If anything frightens you, call Desmond?" She, therefore, went lightly upstairs again and knocked at Desmond's door, while Ameera, wishing to escape cross questioning by that expert in the art, retreated to Cagney's side *via* the General's bedroom, and knew that no one would follow her.

Desmond was soon with Adelaide in the hall. The knowledge that Sheila, his dainty, delicate Sheila, was at the mercy of all the lawlessness which surrounded the ill-starred house reduced him to helpless

## ROSNAH

frenzy which Adelaide's attempts at comfort did little to allay.

"She's probably bolted," remarked that young lady. "Really one can't wonder at it, for say what you will, Mr. Fitzgerald, this sort of thing is not particularly pleasant. I'll wager she has taken the late train to Dublin; she knows plenty of people there who would be glad enough to take her in; and, mark my words, she's perfectly well able to take care of herself. I never saw any one more so. I shouldn't have disturbed you at all except that if anything disagreeable *should* occur you would consider me 'accessory before the fact' or something technical and criminal like that. And there may be some other even more simple explanation," she went on when he repudiated this suggestion with angry scorn. "Perhaps she went down stairs to make a cup of tea and got lost in the catacombs; or perhaps her candle blew out. Oh, any of a dozen things may have happened. These are not the middle ages, when dragons swallowed maidens, and she will probably come walking in on you as calm and serene as ever, to say that she has been for a stroll, or down to see if The Devil has everything he wants."

"Alone?" commented Desmond, "in the rain?"

"Well, I am trying to be comforting. One can only do one's best. If I were you I should, before alarming the others, go down and look for her in the

## ROSNAH

kitchen. There's a fire there. I should offer to go with you except that slugs terrify me, and I know the place is full of them. I'll wait here until you come back—dear Mr. Fitzgerald, if you look so tragic I shall be sorry I called you."

"Thank Heaven, you did," he answered. "Sit in this chair and put this shawl across your knees. I shall be back in a few moments."

Adelaide listened to his retreating steps and pictured, with a shudder, the trampled slugs in his wake. But nothing could keep her long from the contemplation of her own affairs, and presently she wrapped the shawl about her and fell asleep to dream that the Empress of Austria and the Loveliest Woman in Galway were grooming The Devil with silver-backed hair brushes.

The kitchen was empty when Desmond reached it; the fire nothing but a mass of glowing cinders in whose light the copper pots burned here and there like little flames. The door to the scullery was open; the door to the garden was unbolted—the upper half of it was open—and Desmond stood for a moment looking out into the dreary night.

And she was out in it—Sheila, whom he had promised to guard and cherish, was out there alone in the dark and the danger. Danger! Suddenly a mad panic seized him and he rushed, almost gasping in his excitement, along the little path that led past

## ROSNAH

the corner of the house and out upon the avenue. It led through the clump of rhododendrons, and as he crashed into them, missing the path in the darkness, a woman's voice broke into a strangled sob of terror and a woman's figure brushed past him. She reached the door before he could and he was almost barricaded out before he had reassured her as to his identity.

When he led her to the hearth and stirred the fire into brighter light he saw to his dismay that she was crying; miserably, forlornly crying; and she saw with no less dismay that he was haggard and trembling. It was a fitting climax, Rosnah told herself, to the whole miserable incident that she should be discovered by him, and questioned, as she knew was inevitable, before she had time to control her terror and dismay.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," said Desmond in a voice which she hardly recognized, "what an awful fright you have given me."

"And O my dear," she parried with a weak little laugh, "what an awful fright you gave me out there. I thought you were a moonlighter or a moonshiner."

He drew the cook's armchair close to the fire and put her in it, and as his hand touched her cloak he found that it was wet.

"This must come off," said he, and quite as a matter of course he undid its clasp. "And those boots,

## ROSNAH

too," he went on as she stretched her feet toward the warmth and he saw that they were an even worse case than the cloak.

"No, no," she protested as he knelt beside her. "No, no, I will be going up in a moment. I only stopped to breathe. O Desmond, Desmond, I have had such a fright!"

"I know; I'm sorry," he answered as he calmly went on with the unlacing of her shoes, "ever so sorry. But you know I couldn't let you vanish into the night without making an effort to find you, and now that I have found you I can't allow you to make yourself ill by sitting about in wet things."

The warmth of the fire and the kindliness of his voice and touch, coming so quickly upon horror and darkness had dazed the girl for a moment, and Desmond, as he drew off her shoes and chafed her little silk-clad feet, felt a surge of emotion, which he knew must be pure thankfulness, that made him dumb and blind. He had never known that gratitude, pure and unalloyed, could so shake a man. What did anything matter now that she was safe? What could anything ever have mattered if she had come to harm?

"O my dear, my dear," he almost sobbed, laying his head against her knee, "O my dear, my dear."

"I'm sorry," she said, as she laid her hand upon his hair, "but I never thought you'd miss me. Would



## ROSNAH

you like me to tell you where I've been? I think I must tell you, for it's time for something to be done."

"Then tell me, of course," said he, "but don't ask me to get up, and don't take away your hand. O Sheila, I wouldn't give my sister for all King Solomon's wives. What little feet you have! What soft little hands! Ten minutes ago I was in Hell, and now I'm in Heaven. No, don't jump and take your hand away; put it back there I tell you. Oh! why didn't that stupid Governor of ours come back from India long and long ago? Now, begin; tell me what frightened you."

## LIV

**R**OSNAH made the story simple and short. Desmond neither spoke nor moved until she finished.

"And now," she ended miserably, "what are we going to do?"

"It is," Desmond acquiesced, "quite the most serious thing that could happen to us. You know, of course, that it's treason, and the penalty is death or transportation. Oh! the fool; the wicked, head-strong fool. Doesn't he know that this soil breeds traitors, as it does heroes and nettles? That he will be informed upon at the very first alarm? Half his

## ROSNAH

little band will go to death and rather enjoy it, and the other half will turn Queen's evidence. Even Moore could have taught him that:

“‘Let Erin remember the days of old  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her.’”

And he fell to musing silently, his eyes fixed upon the fire.

For a long time neither spoke; outside the rain fell softly, insistently; the flame from the wood which Desmond had thrown upon the coals flickered and dropped and flickered again. The clock in the hall struck two, and Rosnah shivered. “*What* are we going to do?” she asked again.

“What we can,” he answered. “To-morrow I shall find Owen and remonstrate with him, and try to make him see the folly and the danger of what he is doing.”

“If he won’t see it,” suggested Rosnah, “then what?”

“Then,” he answered, “I shall have but one course left; I shall be obliged to report the incident.”

“Oh, never!” she cried. “Surely you never would do that. Think of what you are saying, Desmond—you would ruin this whole place. There is hardly a family in the village which was not represented there to-night. Tim was there—Tim O’Connell, you

## ROSNAH

know, the footman; and the Duchess's son Eric. A child! And you'd let the law take them and break them! You'd devastate the whole countryside! They're only boys; they're only fanatics. You wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"You forget," he reminded her, "that I am a servant of the law; I should have no choice."

"Well *I* should have a choice," she broke in. "You could do nothing without my evidence, and you wouldn't get that if you were to kill me for it. Why should those boys be hanged or transported for seeing that things are wrong and that no one tries to set them right? They're mistaken, of course. Their way can do no good. But it's a way; it's an effort and no one else even tries. And how can they commit treason where they owe no allegiance? And that you, *you* should talk of informing against them—*you* who sneered just now and spoke of faithless sons. You would be a faithless son and brother too. You couldn't turn Queen's evidence?"

"Why not," said Desmond, "since I am Queen's Council?"

Rosnah stared at him helplessly.

"And I," she said, "shall have brought about the death of Owen, and all the rest of the misery, simply because I trusted you."

"You shall have nothing to do with it," Desmond answered. "I shall find plenty of other evidence

## ROSNAH

when I want it. I shall bear all the responsibility."

"I trusted you," she replied miserably. "I trusted you."

Desmond had risen and was standing beside her. His breathing was fast and heavy as he steadied himself with his hand on the back of her chair.

"You trusted me," he repeated. "Yes, and so did the Government. Can I forswear that oath? Are you asking me to let this thing go on?"

"No, no," she cried, springing to her feet. "No, no, I am asking you with all my heart and soul to stop it, but not in that way. Not with trials and hangings and disgrace for all those poor young visionaries and everlasting sorrow for their people. Think! You must think. Is there no other way?"

"Their sentence might be transportation," he tried to comfort her. "They're chary of hanging just now."

"Then, Desmond," she cried, her whole face lighting up, "*we* will transport them; you and I. We'll send the whole village to that place in Canada that the Governor General talked about. We'll send them all with Father Dan instead of Father Power, and with Owen instead of poor young Doctor Collins. Ah, Desmond, what a beautiful solution that would be! There they'll all be happy and prosperous and the children will grow up strong and well. What they make by their toil will be their own forever and

## ROSNAH

ever, and they can be comfortable and healthy in new houses in a new land. There will be no loneliness for either those who go away or for those who stay; for child will go with mother, husband with wife; lover with sweetheart, and Owen will take care of them all."

In her excitement Rosnah had clasped her hands on Desmond's arm and her eyes burned into his.

"Oh! say you will let me," she cried. "Say you won't interfere. I'll promise to send them all away where they can't do any harm and where they'll learn under different ministers and different laws to love and to revere the Queen. In Canada her rule is gentle and kindly. It's only to Ireland that she's cruel. O Desmond, *let* me do it! It's been the dream of my life since I was big enough to understand; to feel. Don't say that you will send them all to death and prison, instead of letting me take care of them and set them free! They will still be subjects of the Queen out there—I am not taking anything from her. And, oh! don't you owe a greater duty to the God who made you a man than to the Government which made you the Queen's Council?"

"But the trust of my office," he began, shaken by her lovely voice and by the nobility of the things she said. "The trust of my office, dear; I must be true to that."

## ROSNAH

"Ah! But you have a greater trust," she cried, "the greatest which a man or woman ever has—Power. Those poor creatures are in your power; you would hand them over to the Government and the Courts, and you know the wrongs and the cruelties that the Courts inflict. You know it better than I, although I know it well enough. There would be no justice for them; no pity; no understanding. That is one use that you can make of your power. The other is to give them to me; to a chance for life and happiness. They have never had a chance here. O Desmond! you, one man, you hold a hundred men in the hollow of your hand. Are you going to wantonly throw them away, or are you going to give them to me?"

"To you," he answered hoarsely. "Who am I to judge them? Let them have their chance if you can give it to them."

"O Desmond," she said again, "I thank you, and I shall not betray your trust."

"You have saved me from a great wrong," he said, and stooped and kissed her. Then as she dropped into her chair he resumed his place beside her and they watched the fire in silence for some space. Desmond had so many things to think of, and a certain pounding of the heart to still, that an appreciable time elapsed before he looked up at his sister to remark:

## ROSTNAH

"But how—" and got no further, for Rostnah's eyes were wide and her pretty mouth was trembling.

"What is it?" Desmond cried. "Dear heart, what is it?"

"Oh! you shouldn't," she wailed, "you really shouldn't."

"Kiss you?" he cried. "But listen, dear, how are you going to get the poor devils out of the country? You speak as though you were the Lady Rostnah Creighton."

"I was speaking for the Lady Rostnah Creighton," Rostnah answered, "and she'll be as grateful to you as I am when she hears you're going to let her do the thing on which she had set her heart. There will be no trouble nor delay about getting her authority. Would it not be well, since we can't invite her to share the joys of a boycott with us, to ask her to appoint you as her attorney? Then Owen and you could make all the arrangements together."

"It would be a very good plan," said Desmond. "I'll undertake it willingly. Tell her to let us know exactly how much she is willing to spend, and Owen and I will do the rest. And, I say, Sheila, should you mind if I did that again—when you are not looking, of course?"

"I should mind very much indeed," she answered.

"Even if I shoulder the responsibility?"

"Even then. A pretty piece of gossip it would

## ROSNAH

make: 'A learned and distinguished Queen's Council is reported to have exchanged salutations behind the kitchen door with an Irish lass—at three o'clock in the morning.' ”

“With his sister.”

“But, ah!” she laughed, “you might find it hard to persuade them of that.”

## LV

**THE** one group of duties incident to life at Avonmere which General Fitzgerald enjoyed were those connected with his office of Justice of the Peace. He had enlarged the already sinister collection of firearms and trophies which decorated the gun room and he delighted to sit in judgment over the unfortunates brought before him in a room bristling with sabre, sword and battle-axe; firearms, modern and archaic; sections and whole suits of armor, and, what he considered the cream of his collection, a string of Apache scalps. It was his gentle fancy to lay before him as he sat at the table two large and loaded revolvers and an unsheathed dagger, and in these reassuring surroundings he would deal out to the terrified peasantry a form of justice untempered save by his own irascible disposition and very far removed from peace. His greatest regret,



## ROSNAH

when he found himself boycotted, was that these little relaxations would be denied to him, and it was, therefore, with some degree of sincerity that, on the morning after Rosnah had seen the drill in the Holly Meadow, he went out to welcome a group of the constabulary which was advancing up the avenue. The men looked very grave, and their leader stepped forward and reported that Mr. Cooper, with three bullets in his body and another through his head, had been found in a field a little way along the road to Dublin.

"They think they know who did it, sir," said the man, "though it's hard to decide. Everyone in the place is informing against some other one, and I think the truth of the matter, though we'll never get at it, is that more than one had a hand in it. I have warned Cooper time and time again to leave the country, but he'd only swear at me; and he's gone for good and all now. They will be here in a bit with the prisoner. I've brought these men up here to know if was there anything they could do to put the place to rights for you. A good many in the village will be coming up. I don't know who it is they have, sir. I didn't hear his name, and the Sergeant sent me up here before I could find out."

Presently the noise of a great commotion reached the ears of the group, now augmented by the whole garrison, waiting on the terrace. For it was also

## ROSNAH

a part of the General's pleasure to force his family to act as audience at his administrations of justice and peace. The sounds grew louder and louder, and presently the cavalcade appeared. Another detachment of the constabulary in close formation around the prisoner; and then the village of Step-Aside, root and branch, young and old, poor and poorer. The women as they walked beat their breasts and wailed. The men were white-lipped, white-faced and silent. Gerald sprang upon one of the urns which edged the terrace to obtain a better view. Then, with amazed, incredulous face, beckoned to Lawrence:

"Quick," he cried, "get the Lady Mother out of this."

But he was too late. Lady Mary had seen, and it was she who accosted the leader of the oncoming force:

"Where did you find Mr. Owen, Captain McCarthy," said she, "and where is your murderer? Owen, my dear boy, we have all missed you. And aren't you coming to say good morning to me prettily? Come, dear. Oh, my God!" she cried suddenly as she heard a little clank of steel and saw that her boy was handcuffed to the man beside him.

"I think, Mary," said the General, "that you had better leave us."

"And I think," said Lady Mary, disagreeing with

## ROSNAH

her husband for the first time in all her dutiful life, "I think I shall stay with my boy."

Her presence, of course, made the next hour even more difficult than it needed to be. Nevertheless the thing ran its appointed course. It was proved beyond doubt that between the hours of eleven and one Cooper was killed by a rifle shot in the back of the head. It was also proved that Owen had borne the man a deadly hatred ever since the eviction of Mrs. O'Donnell. He had been heard to say that to kill Cooper was a duty which some man would some time find courage to perform. He had been seen crossing the field in which the body was found. Mattie Sullivan testified to finding him not far from the spot at one o'clock in the morning and he had gone with Mattie to sit with the latter's dying father. There he had been apprehended when suspicion pointed to him. He had refused at the time of his arrest and he still steadfastly refused to account for himself between the hours of eleven and one.

The General used all his accustomed violence in question and cross question, but Owen was obdurate and silent. To account for those hours would mean, he knew, the ruin of his little band; the transportation or the hanging of its members, and the defeat of his hopes. To remain silent would only mean the loss of his liberty; perhaps, if the real culprit were not found, of his life. But the men were trained;

## ROSNAH

the time was near. Another leader would be found and Ireland should be freed. But, ah! it was hard and cruel to be shut away from the glory! And on the charge of such a blundering, ill-advised crime!

Rosnah and Desmond were silent, too, for they knew the charge to be untrue; trusted that it would be proved so, and realized that to establish Owen's innocence of murder by proving him guilty of treason would be the worst of services. One of the witnesses, more strong of heart than of head, fell into a panic under the General's questioning and broke out into:

"Och, what will Miss Moira do to me now? An' her afther tellin' me not to take me eyes off of him. An' me havin' to go into Dublin of a message for me mother. Sure, glory be to goodness, what will she say to me now when his Honor's went tearin' an' murderin' when I took me eye off of him."

"Miss Moira?" repeated the General savagely. "Who is she, sir?" he demanded, turning to his son. But it was Rosnah who answered:

"Miss Moira Keegan is a friend of mine."

"And of your brother's?" snarled the General.

"Of Owen's also," Rosnah acquiesced.

"Is she here?" demanded the General. "She seems to have known this young fool well enough to feel that he was likely to get into trouble. Let her be produced."

## ROSNAH

Moira advanced from the crowd about the door and every face in the room was turned to her with confidence and affection. There was not one among the auditors whom she had not at some time befriended, and they expected her to set Owen free as surely as they would have counted upon her help in their own lesser troubles. Even Lady Mary regarded her with hopeful eyes and crossed the room to welcome her.

"We are in great trouble," said she as she took the girl's hand, "and so, like every one in Step-Aside, we have appealed to you."

"May I suggest," the General broke in, "that this young lady is here—"

"Ah, yes, to help us!" fluttered Lady Mary.

"To testify before me," the General corrected pompously from his chair of state.

He regarded the little figure for a moment with angry eyes. Then to the everlasting wonder of all beholders, he rose punctiliously and acknowledged her timid glance with a most courtly bow. General Fitzgerald had manners when he saw cause to use them. Gerald whistled softly and Lawrence stared. They had not appreciated the beauties of Step-Aside. The Chief of Constabulary briefly rehearsed the points of the case. Very courteously he ended:

"You see, Miss Moira, it all rests upon Mr. Owen's whereabouts between the hours of eleven and one this



“He was with me. He stayed with me till half-past twelve.”

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## ROSNAH

morning. He refuses to account for them. If he persists in this refusal, and if we can find no evidence of his whereabouts he'll have to be held for trial. Do you know anything that could help us?"

Moira did not answer immediately, and in the short silence Lady Mary turned to her:

"Let me beg of you again, dear child, to help us if you can."

"You've heard the question, madam," the General broke in. Can you tell us where this boy was at midnight last night?"

"I can," said Moira.

For the first time Owen looked at her, and there was a quick fear and suspicion in his eyes. She met the look frankly with the strength and reassurance which she always held out to those in distress. Then turning to the General, she answered:

"He was with me. He stayed with me until half-past twelve. He must have been on his way home when Mattie met him."

Instantly, the quiet room was Bedlam. Even Moira's word was worthless in her own defence, and the majority of her hearers knew that her lie was meant to shield the members of the little company which drilled in the holly meadow. But they would not buy even freedom at such a price.

"You are ready to swear to this?" queried the Sergeant.



## ROSNAH

"Ah, why should I swear?" she cried sadly. "Is it the sort of thing a girl would say untruly?"

If she had wanted to attract Owen's regard she had amply succeeded. His eyes fairly burned upon her; at first with amazement and then with a grateful understanding which filled his whole face. Looking at him she found courage for the sacrifice she went on to make:

"He often stays with me until as late as that. I am busy in the daytime and so he comes at night."

But still her own people threatened to undo her. Their snarls of denial were growing momentarily more articulate, and upon the face of Tim O'Connell she read a determination to confess. And so, still with her eyes on Owen's, praying him, begging him to understand and to forgive, she faltered on:

"He is teaching me. I am very ignorant and there is so much that I must learn to fit myself for the honor he intends to do me. For we are to be married," she ended with a wild little laugh. "We are to be married before the summer passes. We are to be married," she turned blindly away from their amazement and hid her face against Rosnah's shoulder, "and live happy ever after."

The joy with which this announcement was received by the good people of Step-Aside furnished a providential outlet for General Fitzgerald's feeling and profanity. In an incredibly short time he

## ROSNAH

had announced the discharge of the prisoner and had cleared the room of the romantic chorus, which entirely forgot its own sorrows and privations in joy over the happy lot of its two benefactors.

And presently, the General removed his own outraged and indignant person, and the room was left to Rosnah, Owen, Moira and the Lady Mother.

"O my dear, my dear!" cried Rosnah. "You are wonderful. How did you ever think of it? It was the only way to save him—to save all of them—and my poor brain was jelly."

But Moira's eyes had returned to Owen.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," she whispered, "can you ever, ever forgive me?"

And Owen came back from his dreams.

"Forgive you?" he echoed. "With all my heart and soul, I thank you."

"And so do we all, my dear," cried Lady Mary.

And as Moira raised her eyes she added eagerly—"Who was your mother, child? What was her name?"

"It is mine—Moira. Moira Kennedy."

"She was a school-fellow of mine. I heard indirectly of her marriage, and later of her death. And you are the child! You must let me come to see you often. It will renew my youth to hear of Moira Kennedy again."

"I think," suggested Moira, turning to Rosnah, "I

## ROSNAH

think that Lady Mary ought not to be deceived. That it would be quite safe to tell her. I should like her to know on account of my own mother, you see."

"Then let me tell her," Owen broke out. "Mother, darling, and Rosnah, dear, it is six weeks since I first saw Moira among her flowers and her old women. Every day since I have seen evidence of her loveliness and charity. Every day since then I have grown to love her more and more deeply. But I never knew until to-day how very much I loved her. She has told you all that we are to be married, and so we are. And there is nothing more for me to say, except that I am the luckiest, happiest man in the world, and that she's the noblest woman."

"I am sure you are quite right, my boy," said the Lady Mother. And then to Moira: "Will you kiss me, dear?"

"Ah, not just yet!" cried Owen. "Not first, if you don't mind. I must insist upon my rights, dear Lady Mother."

## LVI

AS LADY MARY and the others left the gun room they were greeted by sounds of cheering and commotion at the front of the house, and hurried to the door. There was a propitiatory sound in the enthusiasm and an uneasy air about the

## ROSNAH

villagers grouped on the lawn. The Avonmere servants who had attended the trial *en masse* seemed unaccountably furtive and insincere in their demonstrations, and Tim O'Connell, of the delicate conscience, was in especially bad case.

The reason for this condition of things proved to be the rapid approach of "Herself" in her dog-cart. According to her promise she had brought the reluctant Doctor O'Connor to Cagney's bedside. The news of Owen's arrest had greeted her in the village and had increased her already thorough disgust with her people, and the timid cheering which greeted her when she brought her horse to a restless stand neither gratified nor propitiated her. She nodded to the Fitzgeralds, dismissed the doctor to his patient, and turned to address the people. She scolded them as though they were naughty children. She criticized them; their habits; and their mental endowments with a frankness which even General Fitzgerald would not have dared to use, and they accepted her strictures with urbanity, almost with gratitude.

"And this last nonsense of yours," she went on; "this accusing Mr. Fitzgerald of a murder of which you all know he is innocent, is the worst, the most wicked, the most foolish of all the things you have done yet."

"True for you, your honor, ma'am," an old man broke out.

## ROSNAH

"Yes, Moriarty," she answered dryly, "I think you know how true it is. You were the first to 'inform' against Mr. Owen, I believe. I'll tell you for your comfort, since you seem to be so much interested in Mr. Cooper, that the real murderer gave himself up an hour ago. He was a man who followed Mr. Cooper from England and killed him for an old personal grudge. So, now I tell you all to go back to your houses or your work and keep from interfering in things that you don't understand. That is all I have to say to most of you. Tim O'Connell, stop biting your nails, and come and hold this horse."

The village thus dismissed still stood at gaze and watched "Herself" as she gathered her manly draperies about her and joined the Fitzgeralds on the steps. From that point of greater vantage, she turned again to the lawn and proceeded to address Avonmere's fickle staff. One by one she singled them out from the crowd before her. The Fitzgeralds in some instances failed to recognize their erstwhile servants in unofficial costume. Katy-parlor-maid, for instance, when called upon to stand forth, proved to be a bare-footed dirty-faced girl with an untidy plait down her back and a horrible attack of the snuffles.

"Katy O'Halloran," Mrs. Plunkett charged, "I'm greatly displeased with you. Will you *please* borrow a handkerchief. If you worked a little more and

## ROSNAH

talked a little less it would be better for you, my girl. Don't let me hear any more of your sweeping the dirt under the hearth rugs instead of taking it up on the dust-pan as you were taught at Mount Eagle. Stop crying now," she ended in an intense exasperation. "Will *somebody* give that girl a handkerchief?"

Katy-parlor-maid was reclaimed and comforted by the crowd, and the review went on. Mrs. Lynch, the cook, was stripped of her authority as a hand is stripped of a glove, and Peter Carey received what passed into the history of Step-Aside as "the worst goin' over a man ever got, unless he was a dog."

"Go up now to Mount Eagle," she commanded him at last, "and bring the General's horses back, and let me tell you that this is the last time that any mercy will be shown to you in Step-Aside. You travelled with us on the continent once; you have a family to think of and a wife to take care of, and you go and make as big a fool of yourself as Tim O'Connell here. They tell me Mrs. O'Leary is gone to Dublin to see her daughter. Tell her for me that she'd better stay there. And tell the man who stabbed Cagney that he had better not be found in the village after six o'clock this evening. You, Old John, are to take care of the house; you can do it as well as any woman. Do you all understand me?" she asked, sweeping the assemblage with a command-

## ROSNAH

ing eye. "You are all to mind Old John's orders; those are mine. Get into the house now, you pack of lazy rogues, and never let me hear of this nonsense again. If I hear one of you so much as say the word 'boycott' I'll know what to do with you."

A voice cried:

"We was tould to boycott them, Mrs. Plunkett, your honor, ma'am, be the Cintril Council."

"Then I tell you to go back to your work, and if your 'Cintril Council' doesn't like that you may send him to me at Mount Eagle. You might never see him again; if that mattered."

"Devil a bit, your honor, ma'am," cried another voice heartily; "we'd all be the better off."

"Then go back to your houses," commanded Herself, "except those of you who stay here." And while Mrs. Plunkett was being told the amazing news about Moira and Owen, while she was affectionately kissing her favorite, and heartily shaking hands with everybody except the yet unforgiven General Fitzgerald, windows were being thrown open, dusters shaken, gravel raked, stairs swept, lawns mowed, vegetables gathered, scullery maids scolded and the luncheon table laid. All previous unpleasantness was ignored with equal breeding and tact by both sides. Everything was pleasant and busy and the house fairly hummed with activity.

Lawrence and Adelaide, leaning over the balus-

## ROSNAH

trade at the turn of the stairs, watched the scurryings and the collisions going on below and listened to the click and clatter of the mowing machines outside.

"There's a poem about this," he said. "I used to love it when I was a little chap:

"The stick began to burn the dog,  
The dog began to drink the rope,  
The fire began to hang the butcher—"

Adelaide turned to laugh at him, and he fell quite seriously to a further study of her face.

"I was mistaken in one thing about you," he said. "The loveliest woman in Galway doesn't describe you at all. I'll change that last word to 'creation'."

"A lot you know about it," taunted Adelaide.

And presently "Herself" packed Moira into the dog-cart. She saw that the girl, after the vicissitudes of the last few hours, was sorely in need of rest.

"But you're forgetting Doctor O'Connor," said Rosnah. "He came with you."

"Let the shrimp walk," answered Mrs. Plunkett with vigor. "I've had quite enough of driving about with a man of no more spirit than his. Now, Moira darling, I'll take you to your house, and you must promise to be a good, wise little girl and to take a



## ROSNAH

long rest. Your Mr. Owen is with his mother; he couldn't be in safer company, and you can get on without him until the afternoon." She stopped with one foot on the step of the dog-cart and beckoned to Desmond:

"Give that brother Owen of yours a talking to, if you please. I can't very well do it myself. You heard me just now and you know how it's done. If he's too much for you, send him up to Mount Eagle. Well, goodbye to you all, and let me have no more nonsense. Mind what I say, General Fitzgerald."

## LVII

**I**T was some time before Owen left Lady Mary, and in the interim Desmond had sought Rosnah and asked her once again if she were quite sure that she could answer for Lady Rosnah Creighton's acquiescence in their plan.

"Quite sure," she answered. "I know how glad and gratified Lady Rosnah will be."

"Then you think," he asked, "that I might, without being premature, mention it to Owen?"

"Mention it to him!" she replied. "I should think so, indeed. Urge it upon him; force it upon him; make him see it is his duty and his opportunity. Oh! you can persuade him," she cried. "You could persuade almost any one to almost anything."

## ROSTNAH

"Very well, I'll try," said Desmond, who, now that he was committed to the plan, saw innumerable advantages in it and was all eagerness to put it into effect. "I will walk a little way with him when he is going back to The McCormac's. He is staying there, you know, and I suppose until he and the Governor can come to terms he's better off there than he would be elsewhere."

Owen and Desmond presently set out together and they talked of things in general, and Moira in particular, until they reached the boundary of The McCormac's grounds. There Desmond stopped, and there Owen urged him on, telling him that the whole character of the place had changed since the "Childer's Ould Gintleman" got up.

And so, indeed, it had. The children's path was now broad and clear and heavy trodden and when the brothers emerged upon the balustraded wall and looked across the garden, they saw that the house was swarming with workmen and trades people of all kinds.

"We'll not go up there," said Owen, as he dropped beside his old friend, the headless satyr, and listened to the hammering. "We'll stay here and talk, if you don't mind. I infer from your coming with me that there is something you want to say. Is it about Moira?"

"There's nothing to say about her," Desmond re-

## ROSNAH

plied, "except that we are all delighted. You are a very fortunate boy and she will make you a good and charming wife. No, I wanted to talk to you about a very different thing. I want to ask you whether you love the ideal Ireland or the real—whether you would rather live to achieve some tangible good, or die for a phantom—as you might have died if the constabulary had been doing their duty these many nights back."

Owen turned to him, instantly on the defensive.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Exactly what I say," Desmond answered. "Do you want to be killed obscurely, ignominiously—all your life wasted before its beginning—or to live to be blessed and honored by the people you've set free? Or, to put it more plainly, would you prefer being hanged for drilling with some poor wretched villagers in the Holly Meadow, to helping some poor creatures out of wretchedness?"

"Then you've known?" asked Owen.

"Yes, but only lately, or I should have spoken to you sooner. I know that you are thinking of death and glory, but there will be no glory even if things come to the worst. England has at least learned to give us no more martyrs. It's to save you from ignominy, from misrepresentation, from calumny, that I ask you that question. Do you love the country or the people?"

## ROSNAH

"I have never separated the two," Owen replied.

"Then do it now," his brother advised. "Sit down again. So; now tell me."

"Well," began Owen, "before I came to Ireland I loved the ideal of her; the song; the courage; the spirit of her. My country! And I envied Edward Fitzgerald and Robert Emmett, and the long list of heroes. But life in Step-Aside has changed my point of view. I still love the larger Ireland, but I want to be of service, not to Mother Erin aloof, impersonal, brooding and mourning over her lost glory and her scattered children, but to Mrs. McCarthy, seventy years old and still indomitable, supporting herself and her blind little grandchild by whatever she can coax into growing upon her stony patch of land. It's no longer the desolate wail of a desolate land that haunts me, but the echo of Mrs. O'Donnell's simple: 'I have no place to go.'"

"Then," said Desmond, "if you were to sit in judgment, you would value the happiness of the people of Step-Aside beyond the best interest of the country as a whole?"

"Unquestionably. I would be willing to march out to be shot any morning before breakfast; if you understand what I mean; but I am not, and I never shall be reconciled to the wasting of the little bodies I sometimes lift out of their mothers' arms; to the despair growing deeper and deeper in the faces of

## ROSNAH

the men—strong boys if fed; good boys if led—who must, I suppose, starve and die and cry to Heaven for vengeance before the world will take warning and awake, too late, to what is going on here.”

“Then,” said Desmond, “you are not opposed to emigration, which is, I believe, the worst thing for the country at large. But for the people, the breathing, individual people, it offers the most immediate and sure relief. We hear of cottage industries. Until the landlords and the rents are brought into sympathy with them, there is no hope in that direction. Beside which, we are an agricultural people, sons of the soil—step-sons to judge by the way she responds. Now, in a new country—”

“Oh, in a new country!” Owen broke in. “Haven’t I dreamed of it a hundred times a day! Free, well, clean, happy!”

“Would you, if you could,” began Desmond carefully, “transplant Step-Aside to some fertile, healthy part of Canada? Would you undertake to be the leader of a wholesale emigration of the village? There might be, here and there, a few who would refuse to go. But excepting these, would you and Moira see that the others travelled comfortably and settled sensibly and well in Canada? I think you would have little difficulty about it. They seem sincerely attached to you, and Moira they adore. And rightly, too.”

## ROSNAH

Owen was looking at once so incredulous and so illumined with hope and joy that Desmond's question was already answered. He went on:

"You could keep the people together for a year or two. I think that your settlement would be augmented by some of the sons and daughters of Step-Aside who have already left the place. After that time your responsibility would cease. They would be thoroughly adjusted and assimilated."

"It has been done," cried Owen. "It can be done. But it would cost a fortune; a fortune, I tell you. And where is the money to come from?"

"The Lady Rosnah Creighton, Sheila's friend, will supply it. The question is: Will you go?"

"Then there is no question. I'd rather do it than go to Heaven! I'd rather do it than write *all* Moore's poems! And Moira will love it as much as I. She's been urging me to leave Step-Aside this long time. Everyone seems anxious to get rid of me," he laughed. "Even Doctor O'Connor, and a spectacled chap in Dublin to whom he brought me, preach the same thing."

"Then it is settled. I shall tell Sheila to write to the Lady Rosnah that you will act as her steward in the matter."

"She must be an angel," Owen interrupted.

"I have never heard so," said Desmond a little coldly. "I am inclined to attribute a large share of

## ROSNAH

the praise for this noble act to Sheila. I should judge that her passionate interest in the public good and the public need has influenced her friend. She and I had a discussion last night and I never heard such sweet eloquence as she used to urge this plan of hers upon me; I like to feel that she is its chief instigator."

"But, ah! There'll be credit enough for both of them when the plan is carried out," cried Owen.

"And meanwhile—" Desmond put his hand on Owen's shoulder and turned the boy's face to his—"meanwhile, remember, no more drilling; no more disturbances. That is the first condition."

"I'll drill them in ploughing and planting, and Moira will lecture the women on cooking and sewing and sweeping. Never fear, Desmond, we'll hold fast to this chance at freedom. We'll put our guns aside until we hunt with them in our own preserves across the water."

## LVIII

**F**OR the next two weeks the emigration of Step-Aside formed the only topic of conversation; the only incentive to effort; at Avonmere. The local powers: Herself, The McCormac, the Duchess of Clontarf, Mr. Plunkett, Moira and Father Dan, the

## ROSNAH

gentle soggarth aroon, co-operated busily and heartily with the Avonmere element, which comprised Desmond, Rosnah, Owen and Lady Mary. Lawrence and Adelaide were too pre-occupied with their own young affairs to be very enthusiastic about anything else; and Gerald, a hundred times a day, made up his mind to go back to Paris, and a hundred and one times changed it and decided to remain to enjoy the ever-diverting spectacle of his father. That doughty warrior found himself completely brushed aside. All his plans fell idly back upon his hands; all his proposed picnics were unattended; all his remonstrances unheard. His womenkind were always in the village or at Mount Eagle conferring with the Plunketts, teaching the women, or directing the orgy of dress-making which was going on in the cottages; while Owen and Desmond went about among the men advising them, consulting with them or interviewing the corps of expert gardeners and agriculturists whom The McCormac had imported, and who made the reclaiming of The McCormac's long-neglected property a series of field lectures in agriculture and forestry for the intending emigrants.

In vain the General fumed and swore. In vain he remonstrated against such an unnatural condition of things. Nearly all the servants at Avonmere were enrolled for emigration, and their substitutes imported from the Dublin intelligence offices, were not



## ROSTNAH

of a kind to promote the General's comfort. General Fitzgerald always withheld his approval from plans which were not of his designing or not directed to his interest.

"Upon my soul," The McCormac remarked to Desmond, "the man thinks that we ought to refuse the heavenly charity of this sweet and unknown lady; let these poor creatures rot in their rotting hovels, that they might bring up boys to clean his boots and girls to cook his dinner."

Cagney was his master's only refuge. The General would storm up to the sick room and report the mad condition of things to the invalid with a violence which relieved him appreciably, though it occasioned one or two relapses into fever which puzzled Doctor O'Connor. And everyone at Avonmere, at Mount Eagle and at Step-Aside found time to comment upon and sympathize with the trials of the meek little English valet who had been imported to care for the General's boots and to bear with the General's temper until such time as Cagney should be his whimsical philosophical self again. Over and over again even this meek worm turned and handed in his resignation. But Lady Mary each time persuaded him, by raising his wages and lessening his duties, to stay for yet another week.

Then, as was inevitable, yet somehow unforeseen, the newspapers became active in Step-Aside affairs.

## ROSNAH

Lady Rosnah's plan grew to be a public issue, lauded or decried as politics dictated, and Desmond was compelled to go to London to confer with some obscure authorities in the Foreign Office.

General Fitzgerald had preceded him, being no longer able to bear his unimportant position and the mechanical duties of keeping lists of names, looking up soils and fertilizers, to which "Herself" assigned him with as little apology as though he were one of her villagers, or as though he—Desmond Fitzgerald, C. B., V. C., D. S. O., J. P., etc., etc., etc.—could be expected to take any interest in the affairs of a lot of clodhoppers. This was the result, he told himself, of having allowed Lady Mary to have her own way about gathering the children together. It was the first time during all their married life in which Lady Mary's wish had been followed, and the General, as Peter Carey drove him to the station, determined it would be the last.

To the General, therefore, Desmond wrote, when Rosnah, for the second time, refused to visit London with her brother. And very promptly that young rebel received a parental command:

"I shall expect you on Friday next, and shall be at Euston Street Station to meet your train. You will put up with Desmond, of course, since I always stay at my club. But I will take you for a ride in the Row when I have time, and perhaps to the play.

## ROSNAH

Let me hear no more about it. There are several old friends in town just now whom I shall present to you. Several of them remember my mother and will be interested to see how strongly you resemble her."

This letter came by the evening post and found Desmond and Rosnah on the terrace together. Rosnah read it silently and as silently handed it to her brother.

"Your doing?" she asked.

"*Mea culpa*," he answered. "I thought that he might perhaps persuade you. Pray do not disappoint him," Desmond urged. "He has been shockingly treated of late, and you see how he is looking forward, as we all look forward, to presenting his friends to you.

"It cannot be," said Rosnah. "There is a reason for my not going which none of you know anything about."

"There is no reason," reiterated Desmond. "There can be none, except in your imagination, dear."

Rosnah turned to him with the light of a new resolve, a last alternative, in her eyes. Her time had come she knew. But there was still a chance of making another perform the task she dreaded.

"If you heard," she began, "if some one else were to tell you that there is a reason, would you still think that it lay only in my imagination?"

## ROSNAH

"Some one else!" he repeated. "Who can know more about you than we, your people?"

"Mr. Lovell," she answered. And as all expression faded from Desmond's face, leaving it hard and blank, she went on eagerly:

"You have known him for a long time. He would not be likely to imagine things. You would have to take his word. Go to him and say: 'Do you know of any just and sufficient reason for my not taking my sister to London with me for a few weeks?' You will see that he agrees with me. He will tell you how impossible it is and why. Go now. I will wait here for you."

The Fitzgeralds came and went upon the terrace, passing Rosnah with a gay greeting or a careless word, each intent upon his own affairs, and all oblivious to the eagerness and anxiety with which she turned toward every sound of approaching feet. What would he say? How would he take it? Would he be angry or hurt, now that it was all over? And why, oh why, had she sent him to Mr. Lovell? Such a cowardly way out of the difficulty; such, she realized too late, a cruel way!

## ROSNAH

### LIX

SO passed three-quarters of an hour and then Desmond returned. Rosnah studying him as he came toward her saw that the hard, unfamiliar look was still upon his face. He was a little whiter, his eyes were darker and his breathing seemed faster than when he had set out in search of Lovell and enlightenment. She started up with a little cry, ready to meet his reproaches or his questions; but he leaned silent and unapproachable upon the stone balustrade, staring moodily out across the lawn.

Lawrence and Adelaide were in the summer house, and the echo of their laughter was the only sound which reached the two on the terrace.

"Please," began Rosnah, when the silence had lasted longer than she could bear. "Please don't think too unkindly of me. I *came* here to Avonmere to explain it; but you were all so good to me; I liked you all so much that I put it off from hour to hour and then, at the last, turned coward and made Mr. Lovell tell."

Desmond shivered slightly and made reply:

"Lovell has told me nothing."

"Then you didn't find him?" she asked. "I think I'm glad."

"I found him," said Desmond. "I asked him the question you dictated; just as you had dictated it."

"And his answer?"

## ROSTAH

"Was that there is a reason; an unsurmountable reason, that if I persist in my intention he will take steps to prevent it. And then he said with a remarkable smile—I wonder how I ever thought that man my friend—'I decline to divulge this reason, but this I will tell you for your guidance: You are being grossly deceived. You flatter yourself that you know your sister. Well, I tell you that you know nothing whatever about her.' So I left him and came back to you."

"You left him," she repeated, "without hearing."

"And came back to you. I am ready now to hear this reason. To hear it from you. But first you must let me take your hands again, as you did on that first night. I want to tell you that nothing you will say can alter the love and honor in which I hold you. I've seen you brave in danger, tender and helpful in trouble, true and steadfast and resourceful in all the vicissitudes of these last weeks, loving and gentle with our mother; patient and charming with the General; a champion sister to all of us; and a blessing to the neighborhood. If I ever heard of a country in want of a queen I should unhesitatingly propose you—if I could spare you. But I can't, my dear. I want to keep you always with me, to love and cherish and guard; to see that you are happy and well; to surround you with suitable friends and influences; to make you my constant care and pride. To make my own life useful and perfect

## ROSNAH

with your help and inspiration. I have told you this once or twice before in words, and every day in thought and action. But I am repeating it to you now because I want you to understand that nothing you can say will change me. Tell your old brother what is troubling your dear little head. We will meet it together and fight it together. And, dear heart, I know that this trouble—whatever you may consider it—is nothing but a mistake. So now, this great secret; but first, your hands.”

“Not yet,” she answered. “You don’t know yet. And first I want to talk to you as you have just talked to me. I want to tell you that your desire is my desire; that I would rather spend my life with you, giving back love for love, honor for honor and joy for joy than to be queen of all the nations of the earth. That I will put my hand into your hand and myself into your care, proudly and gladly, if you will but take me. That I will promise, most gladly promise, to trouble you with no John Westlocks, if you will let me be mistress of your home. Will you promise to remember these things very clearly and very strongly when I tell you the secret?”

“Aye,” he answered, “I shall remember them; then and forever more. And I shall hold you to them,” he added.

“Mr. Lovell,” she began, “is quite right. Your

## ROSNAH

sister is an utter stranger to you. You have never seen her. She is down at Glencora with her Aunt Patricia. She was shy and obstinate and very much in love with Kevin. She refused to come to the General's gathering of the family. I came in her stead. I came to explain; to intercede for her."

"And you," he asked, "who are you? Not—"

"Yes," she answered, "Rosnah Creighton, that spoiled and selfish, worldly woman—are you remembering what I told you to remember?—that selfish, thoughtless, heartless Rosnah?"

He drew away from her and she made no effort to hold him. But when five minutes had passed and he still leaned silently on the balustrade, she rose and went to him.

"I hold you to your promise," she pleaded. "You assured me that nothing could change you; that you would let me stay with you."

He turned to her irresolute and shaken by all the changes of the last hour. But the smile he had learned to love and watch for was unchanged, though her eyes were shy and shining. The sight of her, the sweetness of her, steadied him, and the love of her transfigured his face.

"Ah, Desmond, the dearest of us all!" she breathed and gave him both her hands.



## ROSNAH

### LX

SOME hours later—a dream-like dinner having intervened, where unreal voices babbled meaninglessly and phantom shapes partook of nourishment—Desmond and Rosnah found themselves in the rose garden.

“O my dear,” said Desmond after proving to his satisfaction that Rosnah was real, “why did you let me think that I was happy all these weeks. I never knew the meaning of the word until now.”

“That’s very well for you,” she answered, after proving to her satisfaction that Desmond was real, “but if that kind of exhausting interview is going to ensue each time that I enlighten a member of the family, there will be hardly enough of the counterfeit Sheila to last until the real Sheila puts in her appearance.”

“Now that,” said Desmond, “is my affair. You have put your affairs—and your own sweet self—into my keeping, and I shall take care of them both. In the first place I shall write a sensible, elder brotherly letter—you’ve taught me the proper tone—to that little girl down in Glencora, and then we shall begin to break the news to the others, one by one. I propose that we try the *mater* first.”

“I second the proposition,” said Rosnah.

## ROSNAH

"Then you stay here," said Desmond, "and I'll bring her out."

She came simply and fondly, as she always responded to any desire of her children, and they soon had her settled on a garden bench, with a son upon her right and a daughter upon her left.

"Now, dear Lady Mother," Desmond began, taking her hand and stroking it gently, "we have a most surprising thing to tell you."

"That will be very nice," said Lady Mary.

"Well, then," Desmond began with a great show of gravity, "you must know—" but Rosnah interrupted him:

"You haven't prepared her mind! Dearest Lady Mother, you don't feel as though your mind were prepared, do you? First we'll prepare you—by analogy—and then we'll tell you."

"Thank you, sweetheart," said the Lady Mother. "I am sure that will be very nice. Will you prepare my mind, or will Desmond do it?"

"Sheila will do it," answered Desmond.

"Well, then," the girl began: "Once upon a time—this is only an analogy, you remember—there was a darling of a Queen, the prettiest, dearest Queen in the world, and she left her own country and lived in India for a great, *great*, GREAT many years. She had a *great* many children, and from time to time she sent them all home. And after another great

## ROSNAH

many years she came home and gathered them about her. And the children were very nice, very satisfactory, indeed, all except the daughter."

"I do not except the daughter," Desmond interrupted. "She was the most satisfactory of them all."

"Would you like me to go on with the story?" asked the Lady Mother. "I used to be good at fairy tales before I lost you all." And then without waiting for an answer she continued:

"At first this Queen was so happy that happiness made her blind. She could not see at first that the daughter was different from all the other children. But presently she did see it and she talked the matter over with the old, *old*, OLD nurse, who had taken care of the Princess when she was a baby. And the nurse, too, said that the daughter was different. So the Queen wrote to her sister, who had had charge of the young Princess, and discovered that this Princess whom they had all learned to love, was really not the daughter at all, but a stranger Princess, a very great Princess, with a broad kingdom all of her own; a noble name, and treasure beyond the dreams of the most extravagant fairy God-mother. And the Queen was glad. She knew that she still had her own daughter to meet and she hoped that the eldest of her sons would be able to persuade this beautiful strange Princess to stay in his kingdom.

## ROSNAH

"And so a great many days went by. But the old Queen was a wise old Queen and said nothing about her discovery to any one, lest perhaps she might frighten the great Princess away. And then, one evening when twilight was changing into dark, the eldest Prince came for his mother. And when the old Queen saw the wonderful Princess in the garden, all blushing and trembling and lovelier than ever; and when she was tucked in between the Prince and the Princess on a garden bench and told to prepare herself for a great surprise, she only laughed and kissed and blessed them both," and Lady Mary suited the action to the word—"and wished them all the happiness in the world."

"Oh! you marvel," cried Rosnah. "You living, breathing marvel! You have known it all along!"

"Not quite that, dear," answered Lady Mary. "I didn't know it, for instance, when I went to Dublin and left you here alone."

"By Jove!" cried Desmond suddenly. "Then that was the reason."

"Yes, that was the reason," laughed Rosnah.

"And now, my dears," said Lady Mary, "when am I to have my own naughty little girl?"

"Ah, I have kept you waiting," cried Rosnah, all compunction. "It was very selfish of me."

"Don't think it for a moment, my dear," cried Lady Mary. "I never enjoyed anything in my life

## ROSNAH

as I have almost every minute since Tim O'Connell announced you and you came in out of the darkness and put your arms about me. I loved you then when I thought you were my own, and I love you now when I know that you are Desmond's. But I should like to see the real little Sheila, and that fine young *new* son of mine, your brother. Was ever a woman so blessed?" she ended, with tears in her eyes and a tremor in her voice. "I have all the dear children I longed for and yearned for, and four beautiful new ones besides. You, my darling; Adelaide; Moira, and now Kevin. You've made me so happy, my dears, that I am spoiled and unreasonable. I want Sheila and Kevin as soon as they can be got here. When can we make them come?"

"I'll write to them," volunteered Desmond. "This is Tuesday; they ought to be here by Thursday, or by Friday at the very latest."

"That will just give us time," said his mother, "to get accustomed to Rosnah's new name and to prepare the boys' minds for another sister. And now, my dears, if you think you can spare me for a few moments," she added with a twinkle in her pretty grey eyes, "I think I will go and astonish Gerald, whom I see mooning about over there. He's planning a play about us; about the boycott and all that kind of thing I mean; but he's been troubled to find a plot. I think I'll go and give it to him."

## ROSNAH

As her trim little figure vanished into the gloom in the direction of Gerald's cigar, Rosnah turned to Desmond:

"She's altogether wonderful," she said. "We don't understand her or appreciate her at all. She's the most wonderful woman in the world."

"Ah, no! not quite," said Desmond.

## LXI

**T**HE true and rebel Sheila answered Desmond's brotherly epistle with a telegram:

"Got letter. Married to Kevin this morning. Expect us on Thursday.

"Sheila Creighton."

The young Fitzgeralds had suffered such upheavals about their sister that a brother more or less seemed a negligible quantity, and when Thursday evening brought Lord Kevin Creighton and Lady Creighton there was no confusion in the welcome accorded them and no insincerity in the cordiality with which they approved of them. No one was overcome—save Tim O'Connell, who almost changed his mind about America when Sheila's fairness smiled upon him from the carriage door. No one wept save Ameera, who had found this last of her charges only after she was wooed and married.

## ROSNAH

Lady Mary's delight in her new daughter was as frank and beautiful as her emotions always were, and Lord Kevin charmed her from the first. Her only anxiety was for the General: "What *will* he say?" she wondered fifty times a day, "when he finds that Rosnah is not Sheila. Not that he won't love you, dear child," she hastened to assure the rightful claimant to the General's affection. "I am only thinking of how attached he was to Rosnah. He thought her so like his people. Whereas you, my dear, are—"

"A great deal more like you, dear mother, than you are yourself," said Lawrence.

Everyone laughed at this remark; but it was as nearly true as its nature allowed. The new Lady Creighton was as faithful a replica of her mother as her years made possible. Lady Mary was gratified, but not reassured.

"He will be dreadfully annoyed," she predicted. "And I don't quite see with whom. That won't make it any the easier for him."

"No, nor for the rest of us," said Lawrence. "I would not like to have the telling of it."

"I should not let you do it," his fiancée interposed.

"Couldn't some one write it to him?" Lord Kevin suggested. He was beginning to enjoy himself and his new relatives. It was Saturday afternoon and a sort of wondering tea party was in progress under the sycamores. Tim O'Connell, most unsettled in

## ROSNAH

his mind, and Old John, determined upon Canada, but still in charge of Avonmere, walked from group to group laden with tea and cake. And from time to time Old John stood to gaze, through tears of purest joy, at his Miss Moira, laughing and talking among "the quality," twice as pretty as any of them to his eyes; in some of the dainty finery upon which Lady Mary and Ameera had spent so much love and thought. She was sitting with the Duchess, Gerald and John Lovell. Owen was on the grass at her feet and she was trying to seem unconscious of the nearness of his beloved head and to check a desire to lay her hand upon it.

The Duchess, too, was wondering what the General would think and was saying so to John Lovell. Cagney, in his garden chair, was solemnly propounding the same question to Michael Dwyer Carey. Mr. Carey and Mrs. Carey, majestically ensconced in the open landau, gave all their attention to the problem, and Katy-parlor-maid was "warned" again for her too frank opinion that: "There wouldn't be one left alive to get to Canada when the General found there were two of them in it. An' both married, or as good. Sure, that's four, where he thought he had but one."

"I think," Desmond was saying to the Lady Rosnah, "that I really ought to go to London and prepare him a bit. You see, he was expecting us yesterday. But I cannot make up my mind to leave



## ROSNAH

you. I shall feel insecure about you until we are safely married. You're like a fairy. Changing from hour to hour."

"What nonsense!" she chided him. "I promise to remain as I am. Unless I'm washed away in my own tears. But, seriously, dear, you ought to go. There he is waiting. I wonder who this can be," she broke off, as the village fly made its palsied way up the avenue and came to a trembling stop before the door. And all the wondering ceased. What the General said, as he broke out of the derelict, on its lawnward side, was fortunately unintelligible until he reached:—

"What the devil is the meaning of this? Why wasn't I met at the train? Where is that telegram I sent?"

There was no immediate reply to his first questions, but Tim O'Connell answered the third. He dropped a tray of teacups; produced the telegram from his pocket, and with a desolate wail of:

"Oh, glory be! It kem this mornin' an' I waitin' on the lunch. I forgot it, m'lady, clean and clever!"

Something very like a stampede took place upon the lawn as the General crossed to the tea table. The little group gathered about it, consisting of Lady Mary, Lawrence, Lord Kevin and the real Sheila, held their ground. Adelaide had wandered over to her sister, by whose side she promptly sat down with

## ROSNAH

a warning glance and a shake of the head at Lawrence. "Don't tell him," her lips framed. "Come over to me," her eyes invited. But Lawrence remained by his mother's side when the General stormed up and saluted her with a cross little peck at her cheek.

"My dear General," she began. "I must introduce you to our guests. This is Lord Kevin Creighton and this—" as Sheila, who had been standing with Lawrence with her back to her father, turned—"this is his wife."

"Lady Creighton," said the General effusive at once, "I am delighted to make your acquaintance. Lord Kevin, you are welcome to Avonmere. I have had a trying journey. I may say an abominable journey. But I am now," and he bowed to the fair Lady Creighton, "amply repaid for its discomforts. Mary, my dear, why was I not told of the arrival of our friends?"

"We were just wondering," she began apologetically, "what would be the best way of telling you."

"The best way! God bless my soul!" the General broke in. "The best way is the quickest way: Send a telegram. I trust the Lady Rosnah Creighton accompanied you? Am I right? Is she here?"

"Oh, yes, Rosnah's here," Sheila replied with a smile.

## ROSNAH

"She's somewhere about," Lawrence supplemented, "talking to Desmond."

"Will you go and get them, dear?" said his mother. "We will have the introductions comfortably over as soon as we can."

During this intermission the General proceeded to manufacture conversation with his pretty guest. "Lady Rosnah is an old friend of my daughter's," said he, "though I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting her. A very fine girl, my daughter, don't you think?"

"The loveliest girl in the world," Lord Kevin broke in loyally.

"Yes, yes," said the General, rather taken aback by this enthusiasm, and looking in vain for some shade of jealousy in the face of Lord Kevin's wife. "She is a very unusual girl, but I am displeased with her, and it's partly on that account that I came back so suddenly from London. I expected her yesterday. I went to Euston Street Station to meet her. She didn't come. I waited there for five hours."

"My dear General!" remonstrated Lady Mary.

"Well, twenty minutes, then. And I give you my word, Lady Creighton, that I was uneasy, positively uneasy, when she did not appear. I am not accustomed to waiting, and I am not accustomed to uneasiness. I shall demand an explanation. By the way," and his fierce eyeglass travelled from group to

## ROSNAH

group, "by the way, where is Sheila?" No question could have led more precipitously toward the revelation in store for the General, and he was allowed to answer it himself. "Ah! here she is," said he, as Lawrence appeared with his quarry. "Now, Miss, come here and explain why you allowed me to stand outside of Euston Street Station for six hours in the rain yesterday. Didn't you get my letter? Ah! Desmond; so you failed again to persuade her to visit London with you?"

"Yes, I failed again," said Desmond, as he and his father shook hands. "But I hope for better luck next time. The Lady Rosnah—"

"By Gad, yes," cried General Fitzgerald, "where is the Lady Rosnah?"

"This is the Lady Rosnah," faltered Lady Mary.

"This?" echoed the General, not knowing whether to attribute Lady Mary's words to facetiousness or sudden insanity. "Then where is my daughter?"

"Here, papa," answered the pretty stranger. And before the General had time to speak, Lord Kevin came forward with:

"I hope you will forgive me—father—for having kept her from you so long."

"Am I going blind?" General Fitzgerald demanded of the universe at large. "Or mad? Am I right in thinking that the lady coming across the lawn is the

## ROSNAH

Miss Lytton who is so misguided as to be engaged to my son Lawrence?"

"Surely, I'm Miss Lytton," said that young lady, answering for herself, "and here's Ducky coming over to talk to you. Owen and Moira have just gone for a little turn; they'll be here presently. We're all here," she assured him, "and we're all—though we may not look it—delighted to see you."

"Thank you," said the General brusquely. "You are, I may remark, the first person who has expressed or manifested such a feeling." A weak chorus of disclaimer greeted this, and Lady Mary, thinking to turn the trend of her husband's thoughts, announced:

"Desmond, you've not told your dear father that you're to be married."

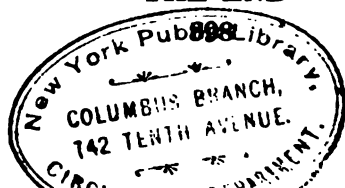
"Desmond married?" snorted the warrior. Then seeing himself surrounded by lovers and beloveds, he added pleasantly: "I thought you, at least, had more sense. And to whom are you going to be married?"

"To me," said Rosnah simply.

For the only and original time in the memory of Lady Mary, General Fitzgerald was speechless. So was not the Lady Rosnah. She tucked her hand under the General's unresisting arm and led him away.

"Come with me, papa dear," she urged. "I shall explain it all to you."

THE END



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